YOU GO HIGH, WE GO LOW

Australian Pulps 1939 - 1959

WE GO LOW

Stuart Kells

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

Research and teaching themes

This La Trobe University e-Bureau publication is relevant to research and teaching in the following subject areas:

> Australian and international publishing.
> Concepts of authorship, readership and the written text.
> How technologies shape those concepts.
> Author-editor, author-publisher and illustrator-publisher relationships.
> Writing, editing and publishing skills.
> The economics of publishing.
> Publishing and globalisation.
> Publishing formats and print production technologies.
> Legal and ethical considerations for authors and publishers, including copyright law, fair use and free speech.
> Writing, editing and publishing in their wider historical and cultural contexts.
> Ethical and cross-cultural issues raised by writing, editing and publishing practices in national and international contexts.

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STOP PRESS
STANDOVER

TRIGGER
TAMED
By
WALT COBURN

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PLUS
GRIPPING ACTION STORY
GUN-BELT GIPSY
by
TOM W. BLACKBURN

and OTHER WESTERN STO

SUPER
Science
STORIES

THE BIG BOOK OF SCIENCE FICTION

AUSTRALIAN PRICE 1/6

WE GUARD THE BLACK PLANET !
AN OUTSTANDING NOVELETTE
by HENRY KUTTNER
THE REVOLT OF THE MACHINE MEN
by CHARLES R. TANNER
PEARSON · KUBILIUS · AND MANY OTHERS

Popular during the mid-20th century, pulp fiction novels and comics were produced in massive quantities by Australian publishers. Most were written by hacks and enthusiastic amateurs who were willing to sign contracts that demanded an incredibly high output of work. Pulp publications were cheaply made, formulaic, and designed to be read quickly and then disposed of. Notable for their lurid cover art and titillating titles, they satisfied an appetite for fast entertainment in the era before television.

Henry Steeger, President of Popular Publications Inc., on the nature and appeal of pulps

'Pulps were the principal entertainment vehicle of millions of Americans. They were an unflickering, uncolored TV screen upon which the reader could spread the most glorious imagination he possessed. The athletes were stronger, the heroes were nobler, the girls more beautiful and the palaces were more luxurious than any in existence and they were always there at any time of the day or night on dull, no-gloss paper that was kind to the eyes.'
GOODSTONE 1970

When they were first published, from the late 1930s into the 40s and 50s, pulps were printed in enormous quantities. Readers gobbled them up — at home, on trains, and even near battlefields in wartime. The books appeared in a squarish format and cheap bindings. Though the books share similar styles and shapes, they cover a rich variety of genres: westerns, horror, sci-fi, crime, romance, weird tales, adventure, and some more or less non-fiction works such as true adventure and true crime.

For the most part, pulps were not issued by mainstream publishers such as Angus & Robertson; and they avoided mainstream distribution. Some were sold in bookshops, but the majority were distributed through newsagents and on railway bookstalls. The pulps regularly outsold mainstream books by a wide margin.
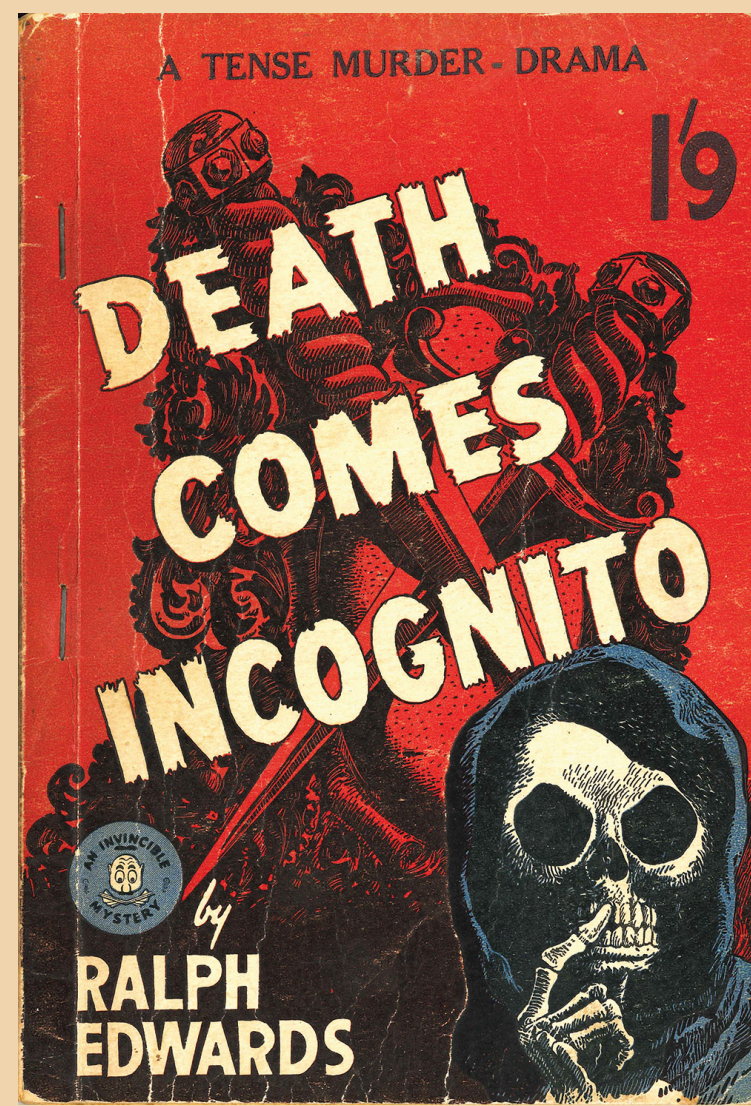

< Ralph Edwards, Death Comes Incognito, 1950.
Invincible Press (Invincible Mysteries series).

Publishers such as Horwitz, Invincible Press and the Cleveland Publishing Co. planned each series and engaged studios of hard-living, hard-drinking writers. With the publishers issuing dozens of new titles each month, the writers' workload was heavy. The diary of pulp writer Gordon Bleeck is now in the National Library of Australia. His diary entry for 15 August 1950 shows how frenetic the pace could be: 'Denny White rang for 12,000 word boxing, 10,000 racing and 6,000 other sport... In three or four weeks.' (Bleeck 1964)

Many authors churned out books at the rate of more than ten or even twenty a year. To meet this gruelling schedule, the authors relied on a variety of tricks. One was to write to a formula: one slangy sidekick, one love triangle, two sex scenes, one chase, two murders. Another trick was to have multiple authors write under common pseudonyms. The writers also borrowed and stole liberally from each other, and especially from American and British authors.

When first published, pulp books were regarded as disreputable 'low literature'. Most institutional libraries didn't keep them. Even private readers were reluctant to put them on display or to have them on the coffee table when the vicar came around. Now, though, we see the pulps through different eyes. Australia's national and state libraries have recently sought to fill big gaps in their collections, in recognition that the pulps tell important stories about Australian publishing, Australian culture and Australian fears.
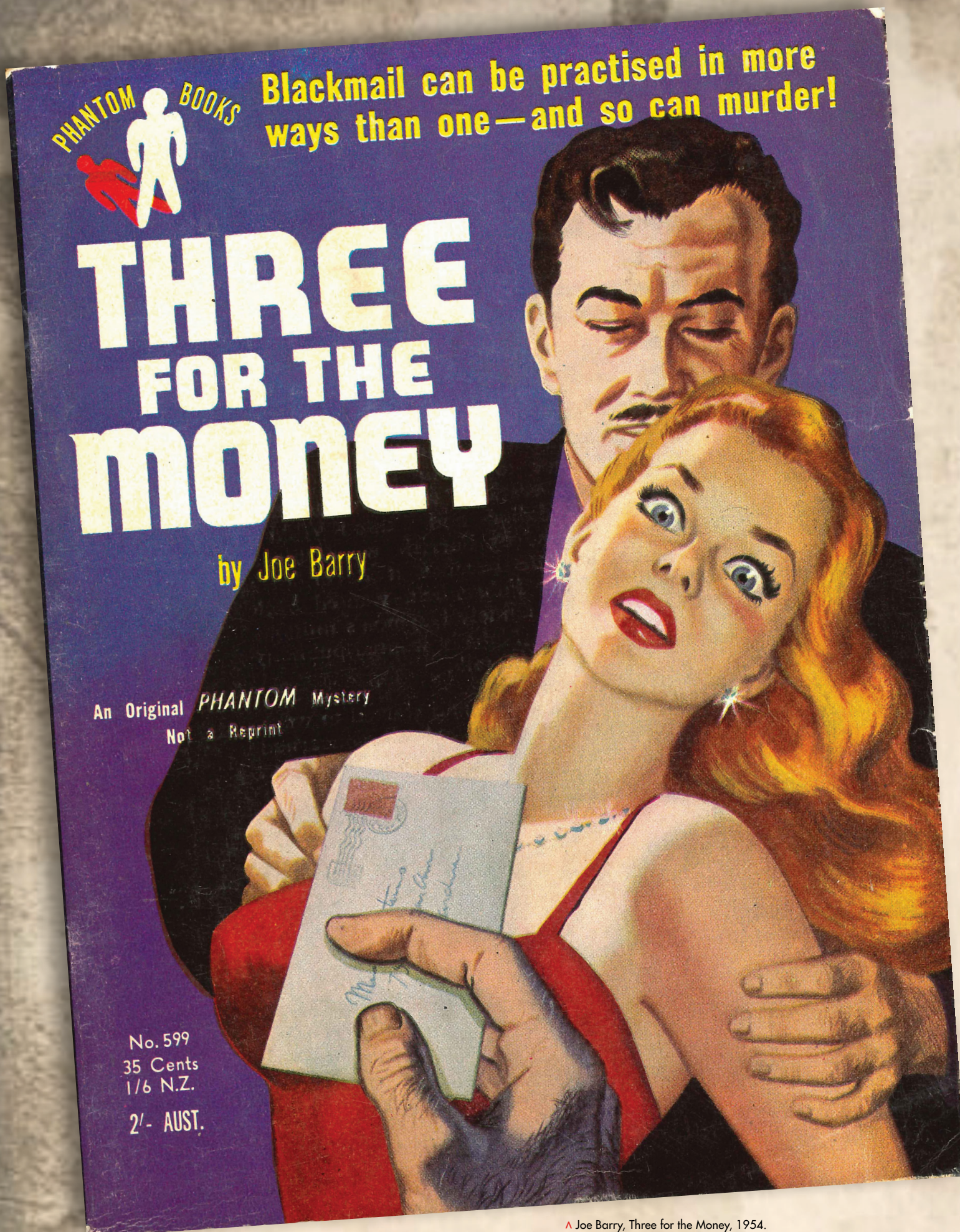
^ Joe Barry, Three for the Money, 1954.
Phantom Books (No. 599).

CHAPTER 1
THE WORLD OF PULP PUBLISHING IN AUSTRALIA

'Since the late 1800s there had been a trade in locally made paperback reading matter (such as the then scandalous "bushranger stories", which were said to be inflaming urban delinquents to rebellion and lawlessness).

DOYLE 2018

Twentieth-century Australian pulps can trace their origins back to nineteenth-century Australia

When the pulps appeared they were self-consciously new and modern — but they arguably extended an old tradition, the 'thriving popular literary industry that developed throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Australia' (Gelder et al 2009).

In their heyday, Australian pulp books were extremely popular

Carter Brown (a pseudonym of Alan Yates) is probably the best known of all Australian pulp fiction authors. The first Carter Brown title, *The Lady is Murder*, appeared in 1951. Sales would be measured in the millions of copies. At the time of Yates's death, the covers of his books claimed he had 80 million copies in print. The books were adapted into comics and radio serials. John F Kennedy was even claimed to have read Carter Brown. (Johnson-Woods 2013)

Audrey Armitage and Muriel Watkins wrote the KT McCall stories — and these, too, were extremely popular. (KT McCall was supposedly the girlfriend of the main protagonist, Johnny Buchanan.) Another major rival to Carter Brown was Marc Brody, whose books appeared between 1955 and 1960. Marc Brody was in reality Bill Williams, a journalist and the editor of the scandalous Melbourne newspaper, *Truth*.

Many Australian pulp books were translated and published overseas. The stories appeared in countries as far afield as Mexico, Sweden and New Zealand, where readers devoured them.

Pulp by name, pulp by nature

Originally the stapled, flimsy booklets sold for less than a shilling. Printed on coarse wood-pulp paper, they easily fell apart and were made to be read and then thrown away. Though most pulp covers were made from thin paper, one exception was an early series of Invincible Press books, whose covers were made from a soft, pulpy cardboard. These fragile matt covers were far from invincible, and quite different from the more robust, glossy, standard card covers of contemporary US paperback imprints such as Ace, Dell and Fawcett.

In the late 1950s Australian pulp publisher Horwitz moved permanently away from stapled, digest-sized paperbacks and began to use the latest glue technology to emulate the American perfect-bound editions.

'Literary and scholarly works made up only a small proportion of the publications banned by Australian Customs. The bulk of prohibited imports were pulp fiction novels, comics, magazines and pornographic material. These items were considered to be a threat, not only to our morals, but also to Australia's literary standards.'

BANNEDBLOG 2013

'…unlikely alliances were formed between temperance groups, evangelicals, Roman Catholics and free-range moral conservatives on the one hand, and authors and publishers on the other. A concerted case was mounted, finding expression in the now notorious publication in 1935 of a pamphlet – Mental Rubbish from Overseas [price: twopence] – issued by the [so-called] "Cultural Defence Committee".'

DOYLE 2015B

'The Cultural Defence Committee was ostensibly fighting "for Australia" (as claimed on the cover of their 1935 pamphlet) and working to eradicate all "low" forms of publishing. Moreover, the Committee was situating itself as a moral judge of what Australians should and should not read.'

FRANKS 2015

Australian pulps were the subject of early criticism and censorship

The pulp label was originally meant as an insult, as 'many of the publications [were] seen to have a corrupting influence on impressionable minds' (Spring 2015)

The story of pulps in Australia before World War II is a story of literary snobbery, moral outrage and efforts to limit access and distribution.

'Certain publications are… being imported into Australia, which have no literary or intellectual value and are obviously published in order to cater for those seeking to satisfy depraved tastes for morbidity, sadism, sensuality, etc. These books are usually printed in luridly attractive covers [and] are retailed at prices ranging as low as 3d. or 4d. a copy.

ACTING CUSTOMS MINISTER JOHN PERKINS, 11 MAY 1938, QUOTED IN BANNEDBLOG 2013

'[Pulps] were banned by Customs under special provisions introduced in 1938 to address the growing number of cheap books and magazines entering the country.'

BANNEDBLOG 2013

The post-war pulp phenomenon was born of accident and necessity

In 1938 the federal government placed a levy on foreign print publications. At the outbreak of World War II, the Australian government banned the importation of foreign print publications, as part of efforts to control trade, ban non-essential imports and preserve foreign currency for the war effort. Australian publishers filled the void.

'When the war halted the supply of comics from overseas, [publisher Frank Johnson] hastily enlisted a gaggle of artists, friends, strangers, even a few untried teenagers, to come up with a set of new superheroes to replace Superman, Batman, Dick Tracy and the like. In short order, there appeared a crop of very Australian comic heroes: "Barty Malone, Taxi Driver", "Wanda Dare, Girl Reporter", "Roley Slade of the Customs", "Val Blake, Ventriloquist Adventurer", "Greg Bartlett, Linesman", "Terry McBride, Rover Scout", as well as the superpowered "Shadowman", the "Eagle" and others. All the stories were set in Australia, or nearby.

'Johnson followed up with the magazine Famous Detective Stories, which featured local "true crime" stories, mostly churned out by moonlighting journos, or by keen amateurs. He issued numerous books of "Laffs", "Gags" and "Giggles" – single panel cartoons, usually around the familiar themes of gold-digging showgirls and red-faced millionaires, henpecked husbands and overbearing wives, artists and scantily clad models, as well as some surprisingly risqué war Digger-themed cartoons.' (Doyle 2015a)

Penguin Books' co-founder Allen Lane disparaged pulps. He referred to the 'bosoms and bottoms' pulp covers favoured in America as 'breastsellers' (Kells 2015 p.249). But he also wanted a piece of the action. In the 1950s Allen entered a publishing arrangement with Australia's Horwitz. Allen's brother and co-founder Richard was appalled by this tie-up, which he called 'possibly the worst single move the firm has made in twenty-five years'.

'Although I quite like Horwitz personally, I think the paperbacks he publishes are of a very low standard both from a production and editorial point of view… I have always regarded our own imprint as being the best in the paperback field and to share an imprint with Horwitz is sheer prostitution. The only possible reason for this joint enterprise must be money and if we have sunk so low that this is the only way we can make it, I think it shows a great lack of moral integrity.' (Lane 1960)

This short-lived arrangement led to the production of pulpy books that had Horwitz covers and branding outside, and Penguin imprints and typography inside.
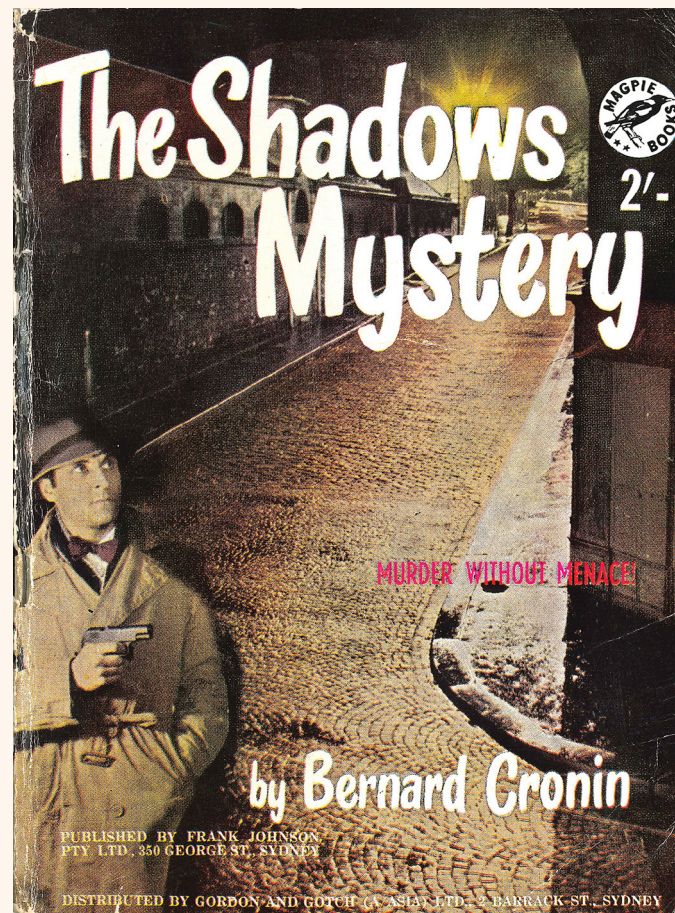
'[Wartime] regulations dictated that no new serial publications could be issued; but local publisher NSW Bookstall Company realised that one-off publications might be exempt, and started publishing serial comics, with each issue appearing under a new title.'

DOYLE 2015A

'The life of the freelance creative artisan was precarious anywhere, but in Australia it had its own special circumstances. Britain and the USA had populations large and dense enough to sustain entire industries devoted to all aspects of pulp production, often concentrated in specific districts. It was a much riskier game in Australia, with its dispersed population and smaller markets.'

DOYLE 2018

Few pulp publishers thrived

Most of the pulp publishers started out as small operations printing comics, magazines and trade journals. Some publishers did well, but most struggled and many were short-lived. Frank Johnson kept an office in the prestigious Equitable Building, on George Street in Sydney, but 'the business was always marginal; rarely more than two or three people worked in the office, Frank himself, writer-editor Raymond Lindsay and sometimes Johnson's wife Vera.' (Doyle 2015a)

A small number of publishers dominated the field

Key Australian pulp publishers included Cleveland, Horwitz, Calvert, Action Comics and Currawong. Together these five were responsible for:

59 per cent of Australian novels from 1945 to 1969, and 89 per cent of locally published titles. Comparing the 47 per cent of Australian novels published by Cleveland and Horwitz alone, with [Angus and Robertson's] 3 per cent of titles, demonstrates the relative size of this area of local publishing… Beyond the top five pulp fiction publishers, a number of other local companies published pulp fiction, from relatively substantial enterprises – including Frank Johnson (with 77 titles from 1945 to 1969), Invincible Press (54 titles) and Webster Publications (42 titles) – down to presses responsible for only a small number of Australian novels in a single decade.' (Bode 2014)

Most of the Australian pulp publishers were based in Sydney

Sydney publishers of pulp included Action Comics, Calvert Publishing, Cleveland Publishing, Currawong and Horwitz Books. Horwitz Books (including the imprints Associated General Publications, Transport, and Maritime Publications) was the most successful of the Sydney publishers. Cleveland, the long-running publisher of the pseudonymous *Larry Kent* and *Marshall Grover* series, occupied a bustling office in Kings Cross and had a staff of 15 at its peak.

An exception to Sydney's dominance is Atlas Publications, which operated between 1948 and 1958 from the Melbourne suburb of Clifton Hill. Atlas published magazines, popular fiction and especially comics such as the Captain Atom series (no relation to the American superhero of the same name). Bellew created the Captain Atom character and wrote the first 20 issues of the series under the pseudonym John Welles. In addition to producing other Australian comics such as *The Lone Wolf* and *Grey Domino*, Atlas reprinted British and American ones including *Radio Patrol* and *Brenda Starr*.

'Cougar Books – part of Cleveland – initially published romance, but eventually switched to westerns. One departure was this 'private eye' novel Somewhere Out There by Michael Grahame.'

UNDATED, *SPECIAL COLLECTIONS' PULP FICTION EXHIBITION*

Many pulps published in Australia were foreign reprints, but many were locally authored

To reinforce the notion of originality, many Australian pulp novels and comics carried the statement, 'This is an Original Novel not a reprint'. Paradoxically, the Original Novels Foundation only published material that originated overseas, mainly from America. (Phantom Books was their most popular series.)
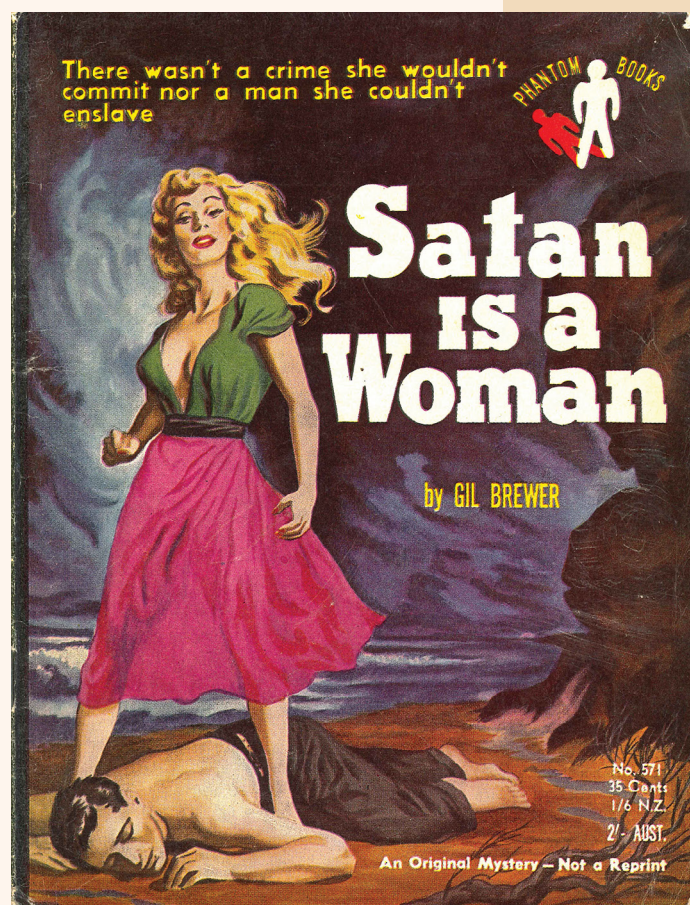
> Gil Brewer, Satan is a Woman, 1954.
> Phantom Books (No. 571).

Publisher: Phantom Books

∧ Gerald Brown, Murder to an Audience, 1954. Phantom Books (No. 591).

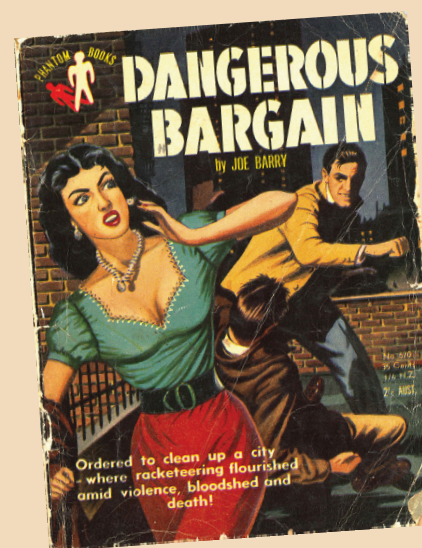∧ Aylwin Lee Martin, Fear Comes Calling, 1954. Phantom Books (No. 605).
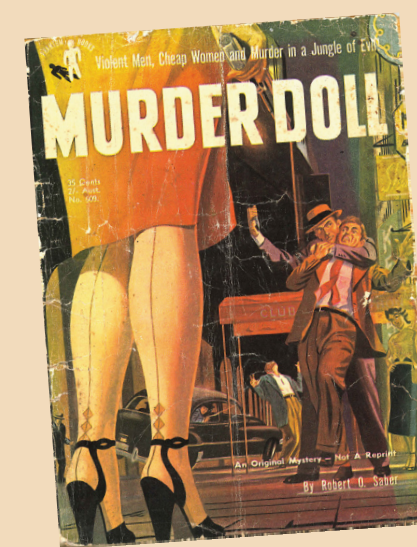
∧ Robert O. Saber, Murder Doll, 1951. Phantom Books (No. 509).

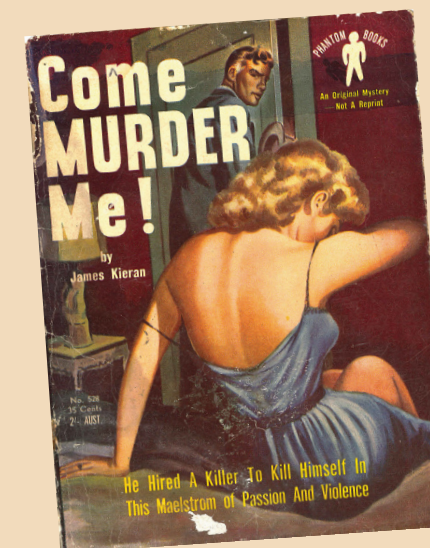∧ Paul Whelton, In Comes Death, 1954. Phantom Books (No. 597).

∧ Harry Whittington, Drawn to evil, 1954. Phantom Books (No. 567).

∧ Joe Barry, Dangerous Bargain, 1954. Phantom Books (No. 570).

∧ Harry Whittington, Vengeful Sinner, 1954. Phantom Books (No. 580).

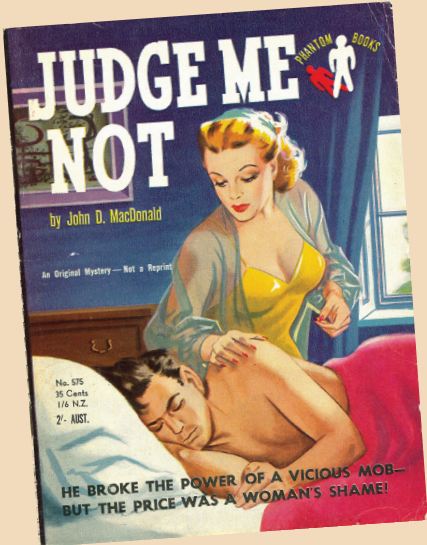∧ James Kieran, Come Murder Me!, 1953. Phantom Books (No. 528).

^ Harry Whittington, The Brass Monkey, 1953.
Phantom Books (No. 526).

^ Richard S. Prather, Find This Woman, 1954.
Phantom Books (No. 576).
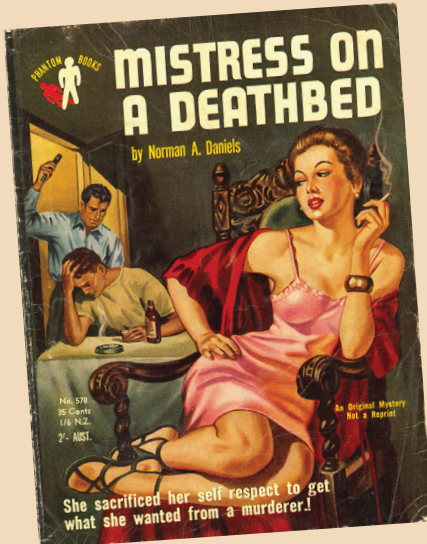

^ John D. MacDonald, Judge Me Not, 1954.
Phantom Books (No. 575).

^ Don Stanford, Slaughtered Lovelies, 1953.
Phantom Books (No. 523).

^ Lawrence G. Blochmann, Pursuit, 1954.
Phantom Books (No. 559).

^ Norman A. Daniels, Mistress on a Deathbed, 1954.
Phantom Books (No. 578).
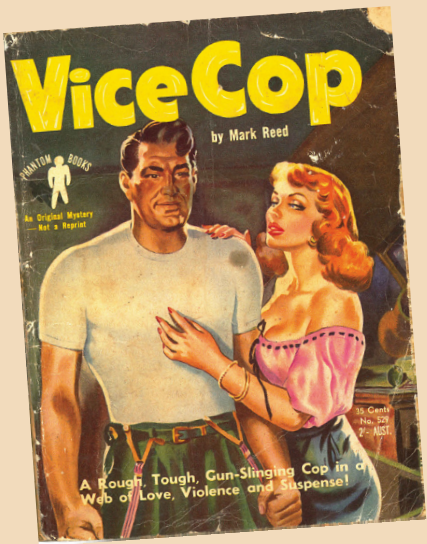
^ Mike Reed, Vice Cop, 1953.
Phantom Books (No. 529).

^ Day Keene, Death House Doll, 1954.
Phantom Books (No. 611).
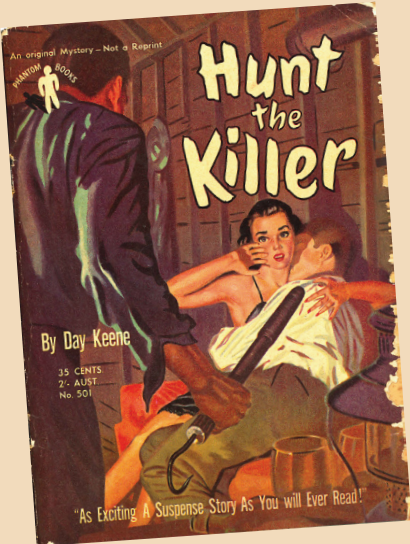
^ Day Keene, Hunt the Killer, 1951.
Phantom Books (No. 501).

^ Mel Colton, Never Kill a Cop, 1954.
Phantom Classics (No. 606).

^ F. & R. Lockridge, A Taste of Murder, 1954.
Phantom Books (No. 610).

^ Edwards Aarons, Escape to Love, 1953.
Phantom Books (No. 533).

Pulp publishers regularly pushed the boundaries of propriety

The authors and their publishers often strayed close to the edge of what the censors would tolerate. 'They were competing with one another to get as sexed up as they possibly could be, without bringing in any real trouble from the police or the censors.' (Peter Doyle, quoted in Raschella 2015)
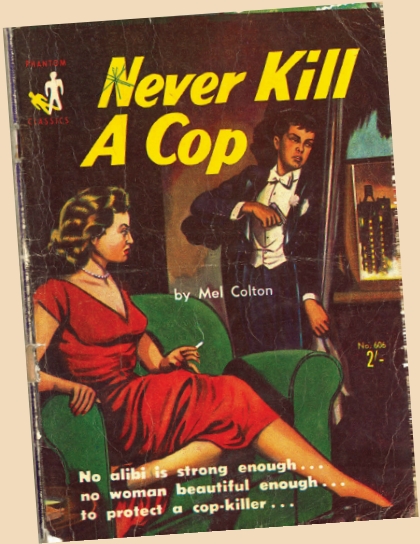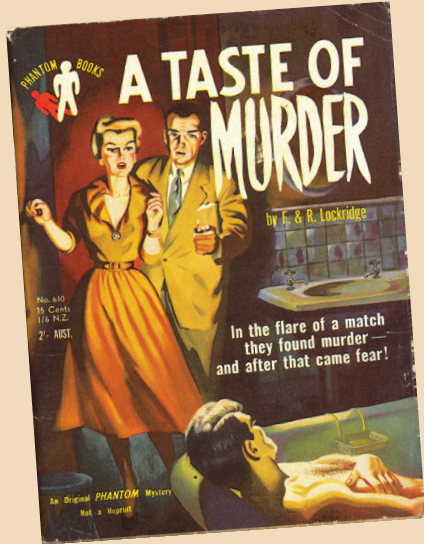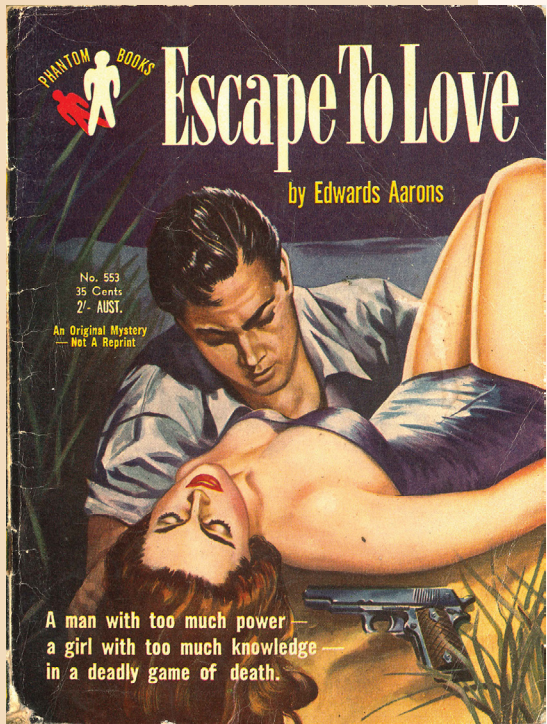
The arrival of television spelled the end of the golden era of pulp

The pulp authors and publishers were on to a good thing – until the late 1950s.. By that time, scores of publishers had entered the field. But, after the import restrictions were lifted in 1958, foreign pulps flooded the country and many local pulp publishers did not survive.

The easing of import restrictions – combined with the arrival of television in 1956, plus top 40 radio and the burgeoning teen culture – brought the golden era of Australian pulps to an end. According to Peter Doyle these competing distractions eroded the audience base of pulps, which fell out of fashion.

'Although many publishing houses continued to churn out books until the seventies, the golden era of Australian pulp fiction lasted only until 1959, when the levy ended and cheaper imports flooded in again.'
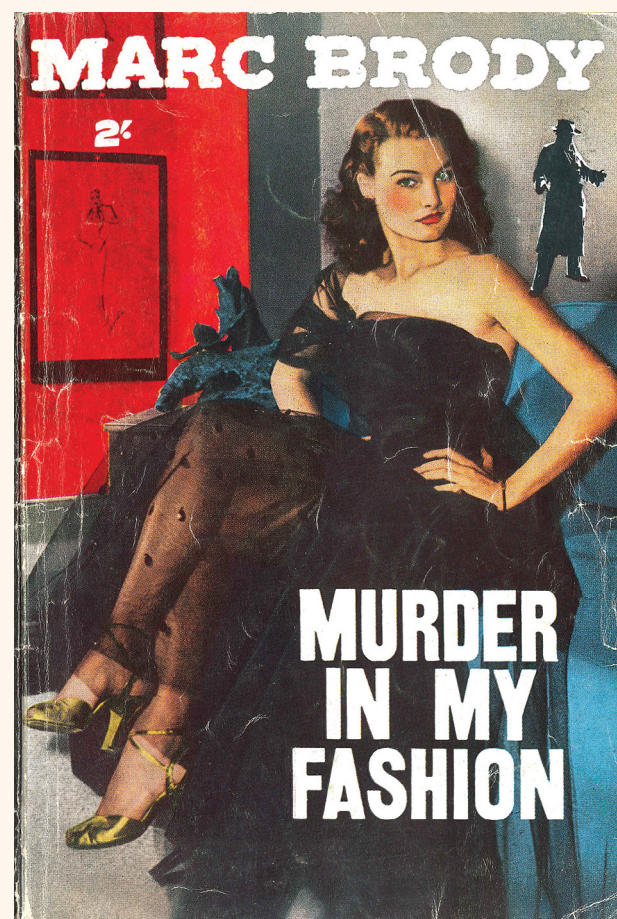LANDRAGIN 2011

PUBLISHER: HORWITZ

'The Horwitz Company was established in 1921 by Israel and Ruth Horwitz. The company remained a family concern for over ninety years, being later run by their son Stanley, who was eventually succeeded by his son Peter and daughter Susan. Horwitz initially specialised in trade journals and a sporting magazine, before expanding into mass-market publishing… This strategy saw the company flourish as a publisher of cheap paperback novels (pulp fiction) during the 1950s and 1960s, with the most popular genres being crime, thriller, war, and romance. Among its stable of successful house writers were Alan Yates (better known as Carter Brown), and J. E. MacDonnell. The company also expanded into comics during this period…

'In 1921, [Israel and] Ruth established a small printing and publishing concern in Sydney after purchasing a Gestetner stencil duplicating machine. The business initially produced a variety of trade journals under at least two publishing names: Transport Publishing Company and Associated General Publications… While the business gradually expanded its operations throughout the 1920s and 1930s, it was not until the mid-1940s that the company began to cement its reputation and identity as an emerging book publisher. Up until that time, the business employed around

∧ Marc Brody, Murder in My Fashion, 1955.
Horwitz Publications for Transport Publishing Co.
Image used with permission from Horwitz Publications.

ten people. By the end of the Second World War, it had acquired two suburban newspapers and a small printery in the inner-city suburb of Glebe…

'The 1950s were spectacularly successful for the company. During this decade, it dominated the paperback fiction market with crime/detective novels from bestselling authors such as Peter Carter Brown (aka Alan Yates) and wartime naval adventures by J. E. MacDonnell…

'The crime series, which featured fiction by both Australian and American writers, also saw the introduction of popular series characters such as Marc Brody (q.v.) and K. T. McCall (q.v.), both series penned by Australian authors… By the end of the decade, the company was publishing around twenty-four paperbacks each month. In addition to crime, these included romance, war adventure, westerns, humour, and a regular selection of non-fiction subjects, such as cooking and sport.' (AustLit 2017)
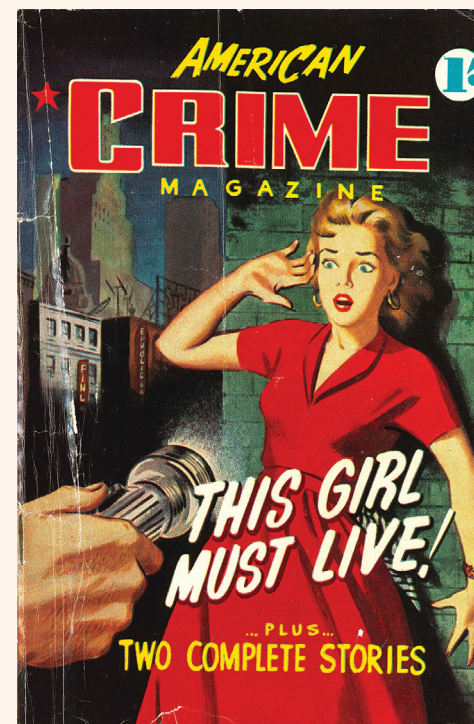
PUBLISHER: CLEVELAND PUBLISHING

'Cleveland Publishing Co. Pty Ltd… was founded in Sydney… in 1953 by Jack Atkins. Having its beginnings in the boom of pulp fiction writing in the 1950s, Cleveland prospered as a publisher of high-quality short-stories, principally in the western genre… At its height, Cleveland Publishing printed 18… westerns each month with print runs for each of its titles peaking at 25,000… [In the stories] values such as decency, integrity, grit and valour prevail.'

'Cleveland - Publishing Westerns Since 1953'. In addition to westerns, Cleveland also published detective stories, romances and crime novelettes. (Cleveland, undated)

< American Crime Magazine, No. 16, 1954.
Cleveland Publishing Co.

PUBLISHER: ACTION COMICS

'Action Comics started as Leisure Publications in the mid-1940s. H. John Edwards, a writer, purchased the company (named it after himself) and ran it until Action Comics took it over in the early 1950s. He also wrote several books (around 30,000 words) for their imprints Anchor Books, Shamrock and Redback Mystery Novels.' (Johnson-Woods 2006)

'Action Comics was one of the small Australian paperback publishers which flourished during the boom years of the 1940s and 50s. In the early 1950s they grew big enough to take over Leisure Publications, which had mainly been publishing westerns. One of the brands of Leisure Publications was Mercury Novels which produced a handful of books in the late 1950s.' (Popple 2019)

< Action Detective Magazine, No. 27, 1954.
Action Comics.
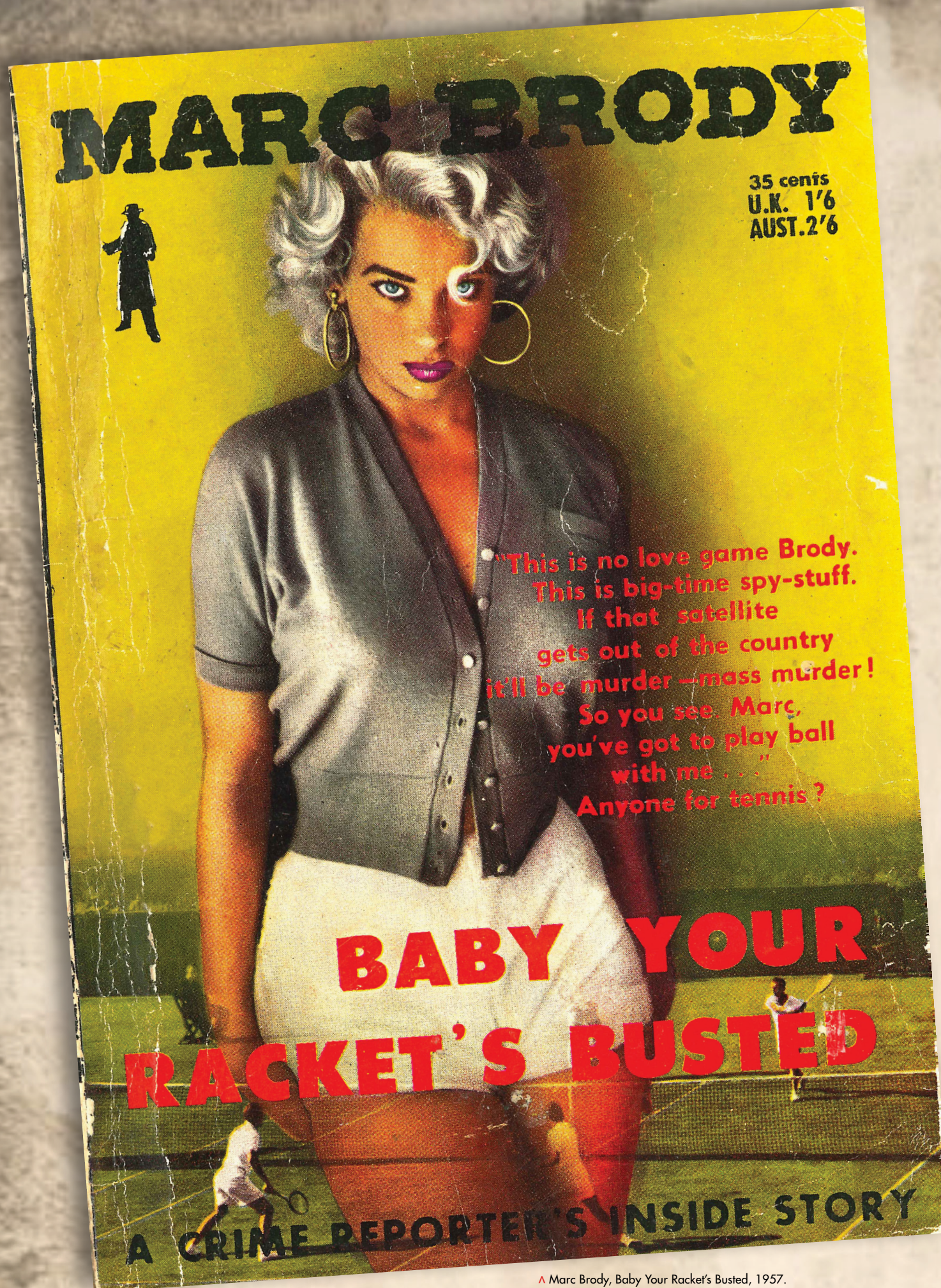
∧ Marc Brody, Baby Your Racket's Busted, 1957.
Horwitz Publications for Transport Publishing Co.
Image used with permission from Horwitz Publications.

LIFE AS A PULP AUTHOR

Pulp authors did a diversity of other work, both before and during their pulp writing careers

Pulp publishers roped in writers from wherever they could be found. Amateurs, accountants, moonlighting journalists. According to Toni Johnson-Woods, in the early years of pulp 'there weren't that many experienced writers [so] the publishers asked all sorts of people to write. The result was that anyone who could provide enough words got published – hence the poor quality of some of the material. Still it provided extra income for railway workers, accountants, teachers and those willing to spend their weekends writing at their kitchen table. Many of the writers… admitted that they wanted the extra money to buy a house. It was the post-World War Two boom in Australia.' (Johnson-Woods 2010)

Born in 1917 in Mackay, Queensland, James Edmond MacDonnell joined the navy at 17 and served in World War II. According to the Daily Telegraph, MacDonnell had a busy war. 'He served in the South Atlantic, Indian Ocean and Pacific, and saw enough fighting to satisfy any normal man's appetite.' (Ray 2006) The Book Depot, Melbourne, published his first book, Fleet Destroyer, in 1945 while he was still on active service as a Petty Officer.

John Heming claimed to have had careers as a boxer, stage actor, producer, journalist, acrobat, actor, singer, dancer, comedian and scene-painter. Gordon Bleeck was a rail worker in Sydney's eastern suburbs. Alan Yates, aka Carter Brown, had worked as a publicist for Qantas.

Pulp authors displayed exceptional genre versatility

Few pulp authors stuck to a single genre. Keith Hetherington wrote around 400 novels – perhaps more – covering adventure, crime, war and westerns. Naval writer JE MacDonnell also wrote spy stories and medical novels; and as James McNell he wrote children's books. As well as the Carter Brown mysteries, Alan Yates wrote westerns, romances and science fiction.
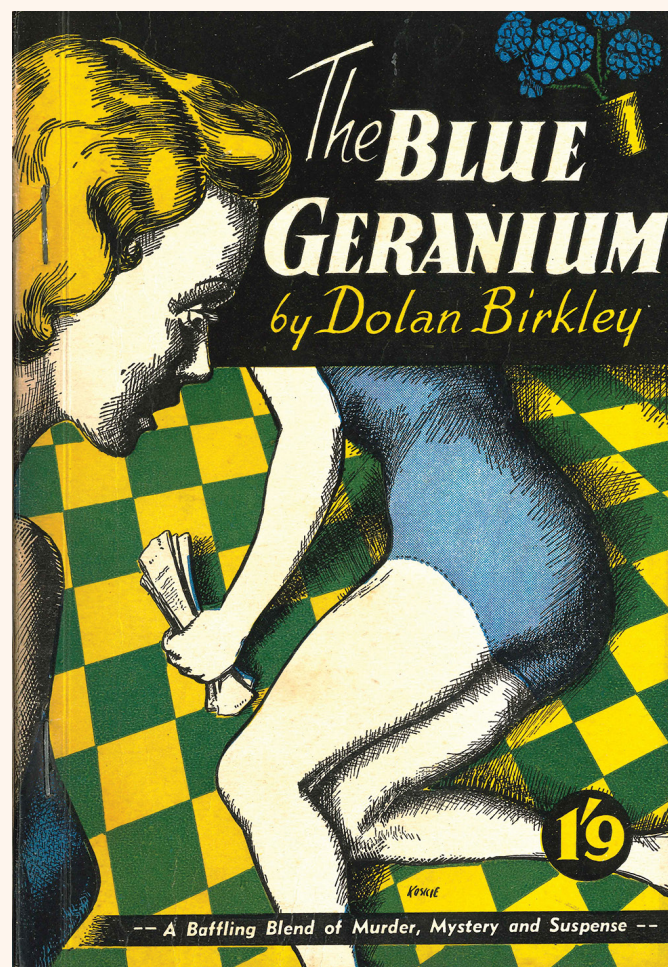
Pulp authors wrote a lot more than just pulp

In addition to writing pulp fiction, JE MacDonnell contributed war-related factual articles to magazines, newspapers and the annual Australian War Memorial books that were issued during and after WWII. Keith Hetherington wrote for magazines, radio and television, including scripts for *Homicide, Division 4* and *Matlock Police* (Mills, undated). JW Heming also wrote *Etiquette for All Occasions* (1953), *What Every Man Should Know* (1953) and a book on speechmaking (Johnson-Woods 2008).

'Born in Wales, Philip Holden arrived in Australia in 1953. He worked first as a farmer and then, from 1961, as a deer hunter in New Zealand. His experiences in these years were later included in a number of books on hunting, both instructional (Wild Pig in Australia, 1994) and autobiographical (The Deer Hunters, 1976). After returning to Australia in the late 1960s, he began penning westerns.'

MILLS, UNDATED

A prolific output is a defining feature of pulp authorship

Speed and efficiency were the pillars of pulp fiction writing: pulp authors worked fast to meet deadlines; books were often plotted, written and released in less than a month.

Before his death in 1953 John Winton (Jack) Heming claimed to have written 177 westerns, 32 mysteries, four children's books, 90 love novelettes, numerous science-fiction novelettes, a handful of pirate books, 17 adventure novelettes, 1500 short stories, along with songs, poems and plays.

Between 1955 and 1960, Bill Williams produced around 82 Marc Brody novels for Horwitz, at the rate of almost two a month. Under an initial deal with Horwitz, Alan G Yates agreed to write two novelettes and one novel a month. Stanley Horwitz approached US publishing giant Signet (which had been formed by the former managers of the American division of Penguin Books):

v Dolan Birkley (Dolores Hitchens), The Blue Geranium, 1948.
Invincible Press.

'Signet was impressed with the books Horwitz had submitted and they signed a licensing agreement with Horowitz for ten new Carter Browns each year. For the next three decades, Yates struggled to maintain this writing schedule and penned more than 200 titles of the Carter Brown Mystery Series (1951-84). The series was licensed to many overseas countries including [the] United Kingdom, Japan, France and Germany' (Johnson-Woods 2012 pp.10-11).

In total, Yates would complete nearly 300 books. He was estimated to have written 16 million words in ten years.

Sydney publisher Cleveland responded to Carter Brown's success by launching the *Larry Kent* pulp crime series. 'In order to compete with Carter Brown, a new title had to appear each month and so Cleveland used at least two authors, Des R. Dunn and Don Haring, to write the 400 plus titles; which author wrote which title is still unknown' (Johnson-Woods 2012, p.11). In his career Des R Dunn wrote as many as 396 novels and 91 novellas. Don Haring, an American who lived in Australia from 1942 to 1959, is credited with some 300 works.

James Edmond MacDonnell (1917–2002) was another prolific pulp author. London publisher Constable issued MacDonnell's first novel, *Gimme the Boats*, in 1953, followed in the same year by *Wings off the Sea*. From 1956 he published with Horwitz at the rate of about 12 novels a year. MacDonnell's first five-year contact with Horwitz called for 'a grand total of 2,700,000 words' (Ray 2006).

MacDonnell would ultimately write more than 200 military adventure stories, whose sales averaged around 40,000 paperback copies per title. Like the Carter Browns, MacDonnell's books were translated into many other languages.

Faced with incredible pressure to deliver words on the page, pulp authors adopted a variety of methods and routines

John Winton Heming was willing to write 'anything to order'. He considered writing to be 'a trade, like cabinet-making'. 'At home I have a butter box, and every time I get an idea I write it on a scrap of paper and consign it to the butter box. Every three months or so I go through the box and write the ideas into plots.' (Ray 2008)

At any point in time Alan Yates would be writing a current book, editing his last one and plotting a new one. Dexedrine (dextroamphetamine tablets) helped, as did coffee and what horror author Stephen King called 'butt glue'.

It was claimed that JE MacDonnell's daily writing routine began with him reading a page by Joseph Conrad to help him write better prose. 'It's like watching [Lew] Hoad or [Frank] Sedgman play tennis,' MacDonnell said, 'then going out and playing tennis yourself.' MacDonnell would write until 2 pm each day. 'I finish at two, even if the torpedo is about to hit the ship. I find I have to work in a rigidly methodical way. Otherwise I'd never meet my writing commitments.' (Ray 2006)

'Paul Wheelahan said that when he wrote a western he would start with a theme, like political opportunism, greed or lust. The theme sometimes would be inspired or touched on by a movie or book. Sometimes when he was walking, which he did a lot of, a story idea would float into his head – he would think to himself that he hadn't done a homicidal maniac story in a while, or a story about slaves breaking away at the end of the Civil War.

'He would always write an outline first, and he would always know how a story would end before he started writing it. Bit players would occur to him as he was writing the story.

'He would also try to relate a name to the character: Dave Carson might be a name for a solid, young man; Jack Hart might be an older character, on his last legs… He said he was rigorous when writing an outline to see if there were enough "meat and potatoes" in it – so it was easily digestible. [Readers of westerns] didn't want too much philosophical speculation by characters.'

SANDALL 2005

'Gordon Clive Bleeck [was] a devoted father, a Masonic Lodge member, and railway worker, who, in his spare time, wrote in almost all genres of pulps: westerns, romance, science fiction, sports.

'Bleeck… wrote numerous other novels under some 22 pseudonyms including Brad Cordell, Johnny Nelson, and Belli Luigi. He was paid £1 per thousand words.

'Bleeck spent about three hours writing each day, and once offered advice on the business: "Don't [write] – unless you are prepared to risk a lot of disappointment, for weeks, months, possibly years; and [are] prepared to find your best efforts come homing back like well-trained pigeons".'

—— UNDATED, *SPECIAL COLLECTIONS' PULP FICTION EXHIBITION*

'…there are many cranky complaints over late payments, short payments or out-and-out non payments. Many letters are often also strangely needy in tone. A writer will finish complaining about a late payment then inquire docilely whether Johnson has had a chance to read the latest piece he sent in.'

DOYLE 2015A

Australian pulp authors often were not paid especially well, but they earned a reliable income and could make a living from pulp – provided they kept up with the brutal pace of churning out titles month upon month

The standard rate of pay in the late 1940s was £1 per 1000 words. By the late sixties, '$400 per manuscript was the going rate at Horwitz' (Nette 2014b). Letters between Frank Johnson and his freelance authors reveal 'the harsh realities of running a close-to-the-bone enterprise':

Australian pulp authors wrote under many different pseudonyms (and this is a challenge for modern librarians and bibliographers)

As well as his own name, Keith Hetherington published under at least 11 pseudonyms including Larry Kent, Johnny Colt, Tyler Hatch, Brett Waring, Carl Dekker and Hank J Kirby.

Des Dunn's pseudonyms include Brett Iverson, Morgan Culp, Sheldon B Cole, Adam Brady, DR Dunn, Matt Cregan, Gunn Halliday, Shad Denver, Larry Kent and Walt Renwick.

Don Haring wrote as Larry Kent, Clay Anthony, Sam Bradford, Ward Langley and Max Anthony.

JW Heming's works appeared under his own name as well as Tex Barton, Paul De Wreder, Val Winton, Wal King, Valerie Winton, Master-Sarg and CW Ellsworth. In total, Heming used at least 16 pen-names.

Philip Holden wrote as Lee Chandler, Cord McAllister and Lee Holden. Horwitz author Ray Slattery appeared as Roger Hunt, Karen Miller, Frank O'Hara, John Slater, Terry West, James Bent and Frank F Gunn. Another Horwitz author, Ken Macaulay, had 17 *noms de plume*, of which three were Donald Hann, Paul Lesley and Ray Vance.

Australian pulp authors often wrote under 'house' pseudonyms

Of the 13 war books issued under the name Michael Owen, most were written by CJ McKenzie. Horwitz authors such as JE MacDonnell wrote under that firm's house pseudonyms, which included James Dark, Michael Owen and James Workman. JE MacDonnell also wrote many, if not all, of the Kerry Mitchell medical romances.

Carl Dekker was another house name; the books were written by authors such as Keith Hetherington and John Laffin. The Max Strong stories were penned by Robert Dudgeon (journalist Frank Greenop). Leonard Meares published over 400 western titles for Horwitz under his Marshall Grover pseudonym, or as Marshall McCoy in the US (AustLit 2017). The KT McCall authors used the pseudonym Gerry North.

∧ Planet Stories, No. 9, 1954.
Pemberton's (of Manchester).

THE PULP STYLE

Not all pulp genres enjoyed the same popularity

Detective and crime fiction sat at the top of the pulp hierarchy. This genre was exceedingly and enduringly popular, well above science fiction, which in turn was above westerns.

Broadly speaking, there is a discernible style in pulp writing

Tight, fast-paced, irreverent and often humorous prose. Simple plots. Gritty, hardboiled language with a reassuring smattering of clichés. Satisfying amounts of sex and action. Above all, pulps had to be lively and easy to read.

The literary merit and quality of the writing is uneven

Audrey Armitage recalled, 'When she once attempted to elevate the literary standards, her publisher gruffly told her that if she couldn't write "rubbish" they would find someone else who could.' (— 2005, 'The Lost Art of Speedwriting "Rubbish"')

Most pulp stories were barely edited and syntactically questionable, reflecting the punishing schedule and the ephemeral nature of the finished product. Plots were often inconsistent, contradictory or unbelievable. That was part of the fun: the reader was not asked to make a serious effort to suspend disbelief.
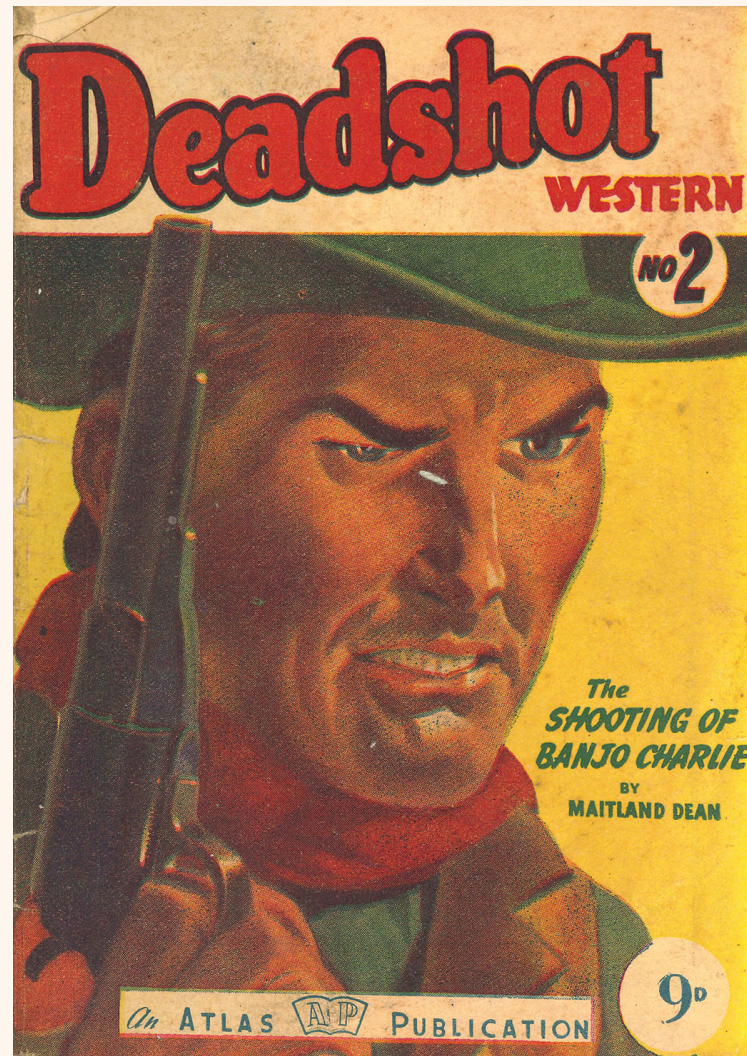
Pulp writing is repetitive and formulaic – and that helped the authors keep up with the demands of pulp publishing

On the writing of pulp fiction, Jim Thompson said 'there are 32 ways to write a story, and I've used every one, but there is only one plot – things are not what they seem' (Calcutt and Shepherd 1998)

Audrey Armitage, writing as KT McCall, was instructed to 'include three women in each Johnny Buchanan novel – one blonde, one brunette and one redhead'. (Johnson-Woods 2004 p.20)

'One of the rules of the game,' Armitage said, 'was that you started off with a body – either two in bed or somebody dead.' (— 2005, 'The Lost Art of Speedwriting "Rubbish"')

According to Paul Wheelahan, in a western 'there had to be a hero, a villain, a heroine, a lawman, and other western colour, like a traveling salesman' (Sandall 2005).

JW Heming worked to a system: 'so many pages to a chapter and when you get near the end of a chapter you slam in the biggest and most interesting fact you can think of. The first three pages of the following chapter are devoted to justifying the end of the last one.' (quoted in Ray 2008)

Few pulp writers went on to mainstream literary careers

Most either gave up writing or resigned themselves to churning out pulp to make a living. Despite his talent, it appears Carl Ruhen fell into the latter camp. In his study of Horwitz for *Paper Empires: a History of the Book in Australia 1946–2005*, Anthony May identifies Ruhen as one of Horwitz's most prolific authors (May 2006). In addition to writing under his own name, 'he worked under numerous pseudonyms, across all sub-genres' (Nette 2014b).

Australian pulp authors often sought to copy or emulate an American style – 'the slangy patter, the violence, the cynicism, the abundance of voluptuous, ever-available females' (Server 2002)

v Marc Brody, Obituary Blonde, 1957.
Horwitz Publications for Transport Publishing Co.
Image used with permission from Horwitz Publications.
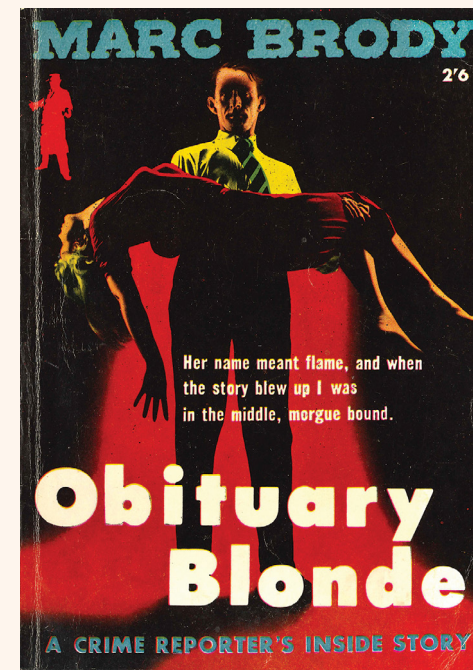
Publishers asked local writers to produce 'American' crime fiction. Ideas of what constituted an American style were uneven, and some attempts to sound American were more successful than others. (Alan Yates' early attempts to mimic American slang and jargon were clumsy and inaccurate. Subsequent visits to America helped, as did borrowing from US authors.) The best efforts at Austral-American crime writing feature now-famous detectives and investigators and reporters such as Carl Dekker, Marc Brody, Martin Kane and JC Jason, whose language and swagger are iconic.

As I noted in Shakespeare's Library, in 2010 my wife and I found a revealing document inside a paperback we bought at auction. The book is Bill Williams' copy of Brett Halliday's *Murder Is My Business* (1957). Williams had scrawled notes throughout the book, and on a separate manuscript he mapped out his plan for another book that would use Halliday's slang, plot points and characterisation. The manuscript – now in the rare books library at Monash University – shows Williams extracting the sharpest dialogue, the most evocative jargon and the sexiest plot elements. (Kells 2018)

The KT McCall stories are set in New York. Most of the Larry Kent stories, too, are set there. Larry Kent frequents nightclubs and steakhouses, drinking whisky and smoking Luckies cigarettes. Under the 'American Science Fiction' banner, the Malian Press in Sydney reprinted novelettes from US pulp sci-fi magazines such as Amazing Stories and Thrilling Wonder Stories. For American-style westerns, Australian authors adopted thematically correct pseudonyms such as Colt Denby and Wilton West.

'Charlotte Jay was a pseudonym used by Australian mystery novelist Geraldine Halls who in only nine novels cemented her reputation as an unorthodox creator of crime fiction. She married Albert Halls whose work with UNESCO enabled her to travel widely. Only her first novel, The Knife is Feminine, is set in Australia. The other books are set in Pakistan, Japan, Thailand, England, Lebanon, India, Papua New Guinea and the Trobriand Islands.'

(@VINTAGEHORRORPAPERBACKS 2020)

Not all Australian pulps looked to the US or sought to issue faux Americana

According to Katherine Bode (2014 pp.64-65),

'...local pulp fiction titles divide into explicitly Australian- and American-oriented stories. In the former category were war novels depicting the heroic actions of Australian troops overseas; romances set in Australia or featuring Australian characters in exotic locations (or in America); and crime fiction, quite often set in Kings Cross in Sydney, but also in other Australian settings (such as the race track, as is the case with the Dick Wordley mysteries published by Invincible Press). The American-oriented titles were mainly westerns or hard-boiled detective novels, and 'Americanness' is repeatedly emphasised.'

Each Carl Dekker book had an exotic location such as Shanghai, Tripoli, Cairo, Rome, Singapore, Beirut, Damascus, Venice or Zurich.

∧ Mike Strongman (Tex Custer), Gun Girl, 1940.
Currawong Publishing Co.

CHAPTER 4
PULP COVER DESIGNERS AND ILLUSTRATORS

Some of the packaging of pulp novels was overtly Australian; national sentiment affected local publishing, especially before 1945

The covers in Frank Johnson's Magpie series carried the words, 'A Series of Selected Novels by Australian Authors: These stories, depicting various forms of Australian life in romance, humour, and thrilling adventure, are by far the finest and cheapest books yet issued in Australia.'

'Currawong also issued a series of "Unpopular Pamphlets", advancing left-wing economic and socialist ideas for post-war reconstruction.'

MORRISON ET AL. 2000

The Currawong Publishing Company operated in Sydney from 1942 to 1951. The slogan printed on their back covers was 'You Can't Go Wrong with a Currawong'. Many of JW Heming's works were published in the *Currawong Novels* series which encompassed crime, mystery, romance and western titles. Alan Connell was also a frequent Currawong author.

Pulps in the Currawong First Novel series were described as 'all "first novels" by young Australian authors'; the backs of Currawong books 'advertised lists of "Good Australian Books" (all published, of course, by Currawong).' (Bode 2014 p.67)
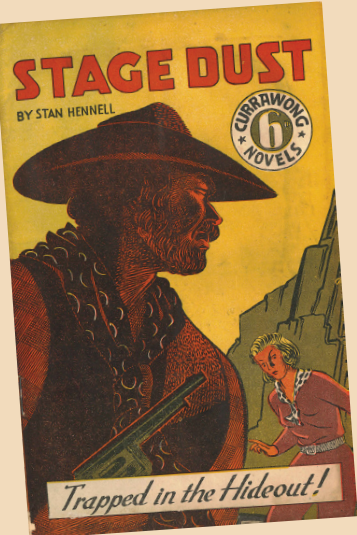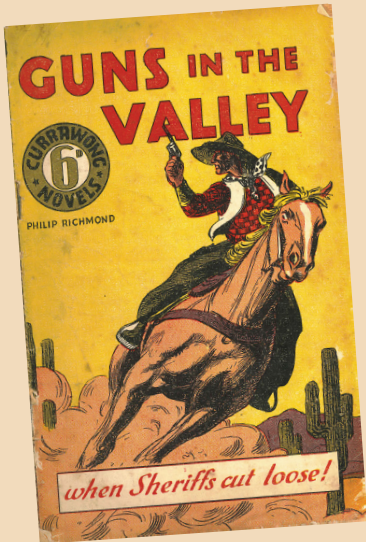
Currawong Publishing covers
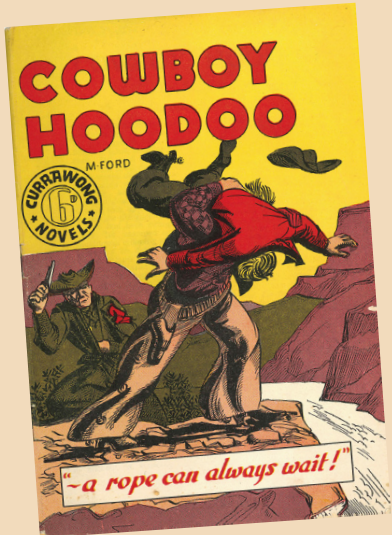
∧ M. Ford (Marie Ford), Cowboy Hoodoo, 1950.
Currawong Publishing Co.

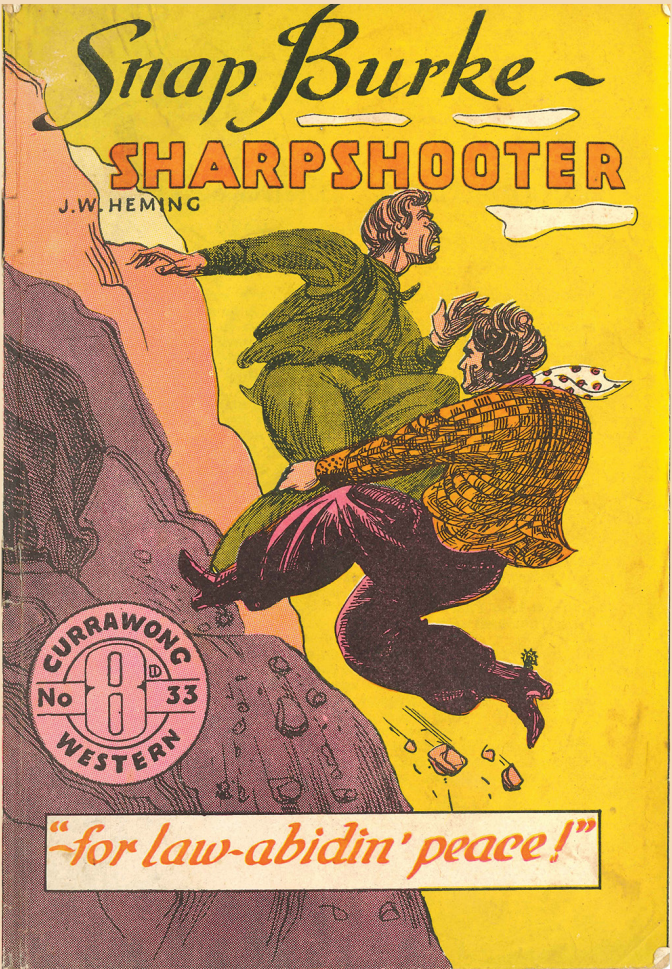## Selected Currawong works by Tex Custer ('Mike Strongman')

Mobsters at the Wheel –1940-49

Death on Wheels – 1942

Queen of the Night Clubs – 1941

Murder Market – 1942

Gun Girl – 1940-49

∧ Stan Hennell, Stage Dust, 1949.
Currawong Publishing Co.

∧ Philip Richmond, Guns in the Valley, 1949.
Currawong Publishing Co.

∧ J. W. Heming, Snap Burke - Sharpshooter, 1946.
Currawong Publishing Co.

< American Detective Magazine, No. 4, 1952.
Cleveland Publishing Co. (Jatkins Publishing Co.)

A standard style and visual language made pulp covers instantly recognisable

The pulp cover was essential to pulp marketing. The cover artwork had to stand out at newsstands and on bookstalls. The solution was to use bright colours and feverish depictions of dramatic moments, with a hint of sleaze and more than a touch of violence. 'Sex and violence were the mainstays of cover art for almost every genre from Westerns, to science fiction, fantasy, and true crime.' (Frank Luca, quoted in Burgess 2017)

The blonde femme fatale was a popular stereotype for pulp covers: the leggy, full-figured frail with a come-hither look.

'The covers communicated the type of book it was. At one glance, the buyer (reader) could easily recognize what he or she was getting: a sci-fi book, a crime story, romance, horror, etc. And if the lurid covers didn't grab your attention, then the titles would.' (— undated, *Special Collections' Pulp Fiction Exhibition*)

The artwork for crime fiction titles often featured shadows, wraiths, knives, guns and rope to convey danger and menace.

Pulp artists and illustrators worked under similar conditions and pressures to the pulp authors

Illustrators such as Stan Pitt and Walter Stackpoole for Cleveland, and Col Cameron and Frank Benier for Horwitz, had to churn out work month after month.

ARTIST: STANLEY PITT

'Stanley Pitt, creator of the Australian SF comic hero Silver Starr, was an Australian cartoonist and commercial artist. He was the first Australian comic artist to have original work published by a major American comic book company, including drawing episodes of Al Williamson's newspaper strip "Secret Agent Corrigan". Often working with his brother, Reginald, during his time at Cleveland Press, he produced over 3000 pulp fiction covers.' (Freeman 2019)

Published by Malian Press.

ARTIST: PETER CHAPMAN

Peter Chapman 'made a career illustrating comic books, crime novels, children's books and later greeting cards for John Sands'. For Frank Johnson Publications, Chapman 'produced numerous covers, including those for the *Kings of the Turf* series': cheaply produced pulp novels that focused on fictional sporting heroes such as horsemen. 'In May 2016, Chapman was inducted into the Australian Comics Hall of Fame for his commitment to the comic book industry.'

Peter Chapman illustrated the Australian versions of comics *The Phantom Ranger and The Shadow* (Frew Publications).

'The Australian edition of *The Phantom Ranger* was launched in 1948 and went on to become Australia's longest running comic book series.' (Chapman 1947)

'According to comics historian John Ryan, Frank Johnson was well ahead of world practice in giving artists a free hand to invent stories, or, if they were given instructions regarding a story's general direction, they were allowed to fill in the story and dialogue details as they saw fit. (Under boss Stan Lee, US trailblazer Marvel Comics would adopt a similar system in the 1950s.) After the war, US imports first trickled, and soon flooded back into the local market, bringing a new cast of improved super heroes, more dynamic storytelling and nuttier comic figures. Australian publishers also began printing US comics locally, under licence.

'The local industry lost its competitive advantage, and [Frank Johnson Publishing] gradually dropped the comics side of the business. Today FJP comics are prized by collectors and, despite their manifest shortcomings, still demonstrate a zesty storytelling spirit and nous.'

DOYLE 2015B
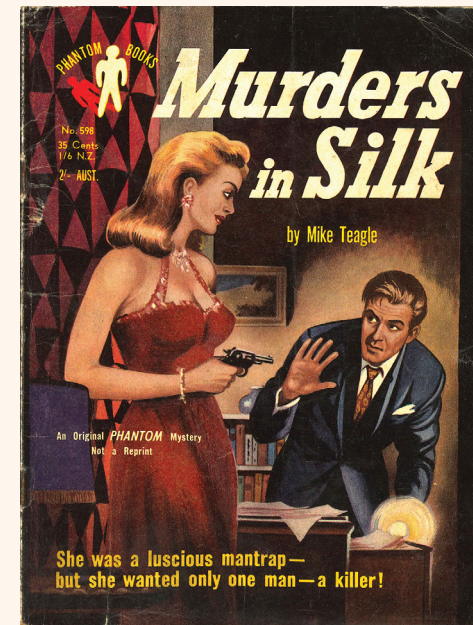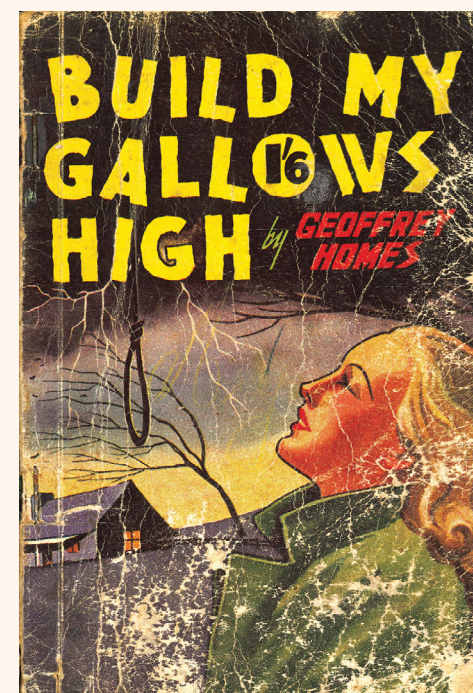
Phantom Books (No. 598).

Pulp covers were often misleading – with a striking disjunction between cover and content

Many of the lurid titles and cover images had very little to do with the actual texts inside. The covers were routinely and sometimes deliberately misleading: 'it didn't matter that the crime series were about male detectives, the covers lovingly depicted sexually idealised women who posed, pouted and promised more than the stories ever delivered.' (Johnson-Woods 2004 p.21)

Some mismatches were especially striking. 'Bleeck's *One Sided Romance* is about a British milliner's romance – the Australian beach scene cover [a girl frolicking on the beach with a surf lifesaver] is totally irrelevant' (Johnson-Woods 2004 p.21). The cover images of KT McCall were of a model from the June Dally Watkins agency — but, perhaps surprisingly, the author photograph on the Marc Brody books is the real author, Bill Williams.

Artists often produced covers without having read the book (this was true in other countries, too)

Australian artists who illustrated Horwitz covers included Theo Batten, Peter Chapman, Maurice Bramley and Col Cameron. 'Like many artists, [Cameron] often did not read any of the material prior to beginning a piece of work. Roy Fuller, the then editor of Horwitz, would simply suggest a basic concept or theme for the cover and wait the allotted time (usually a week or two unless a rush job) for the end result.' (— undated, *Special Collections' Pulp Fiction Exhibition*)

(There is a notorious example from the US of a cover designer not reading the book. The cover of an early Ballantine paperback edition of Tolkien's *The Hobbit* features an emu, a lion and other elements unconnected to the story – including a fanciful plant that was 'meant to suggest a Christmas tree' (Carpenter 2000).)

The pulp cover designs often came first – before the stories were written, or even imagined

For KT McCall, 'We'd be given a picture of the cover and were given the title, along with a few words,' Armitage said (undated). 'From that you prepared the plot and wrote the story.'

JE MacDonnell often started his naval adventure stories after seeing cover art designs from his publisher, Horwitz, by artists such as Phil Belbin and Peter Chapman.

^ Dick Barton Special Agent, No. 7, 1953.
Ayers & James.

CHAPTER 5
CRIME AND DETECTIVE STORIES

^ American Detective Magazine, No. 5, 1952.
Cleveland Publishing Co. (Jatkins Publishing Co.)

Crime pulps and associated genres were at the centre of the moral backlash against pulp in the 1930s. The 1935 pamphlet, *Mental Rubbish from Overseas*, denounced:

> '...a range of other pulp offshoots such as "crooning", the gangster film and Mae West's films [etc.]. Australia, it argued, was "90% British" and those exotic influences were not welcome... In fact, on closer reading the Cultural Defence Committee appears somewhat less heated when denouncing the purported sexualised content of pulps, which so exercised conservative moral guardians. It was more concerned about what it saw as the puerile silliness and senseless exoticism of US pulps and mass culture in general.' (Doyle and Johnson-Woods 2015, pp.8-9)

After that backlash (and perhaps in part because of it), the pulp genre of crime and detective stories reigned supreme. Even today, crime pulps are prized for their cover art, knowing dialogue and classic characters. Gritty detectives, private eyes, perps and frails. Books in this genre are about lust, theft, betrayal and degradation. Stories of the dangerous, the duplicitous and the damaged.

The top pulp authors and house names (or allonyms) – such as Carter Brown, Larry Kent and Marc Brody – dominated this genre. Key pulp crime publishers included Horwitz, Cleveland, Invincible and Currawong. Some crime stories were recognisably Australian, but the majority sought to ape a gritty American style. Sub-genres of crime pulps included mystery stories, 'true crime' stories, and editions that bordered on smut.

'...an extensive campaign was underway which was designed to restrict the reading of Australians through an increased control of imports. As reported in The Canberra Times on 15 November 1934, this control was aiming for: "[T]he complete elimination of undesirable crime literature, the majority of which came from America. [This system of control] is being [implemented] by business interests in co-operation with the Commonwealth Government for the effective control of distribution in Australia. [...] Books and magazines known as "thrillers," which include detective and fiction stories, are not regarded seriously by the Customs authorities, and they will be permitted to enter Australia to the same extent as in the past.'
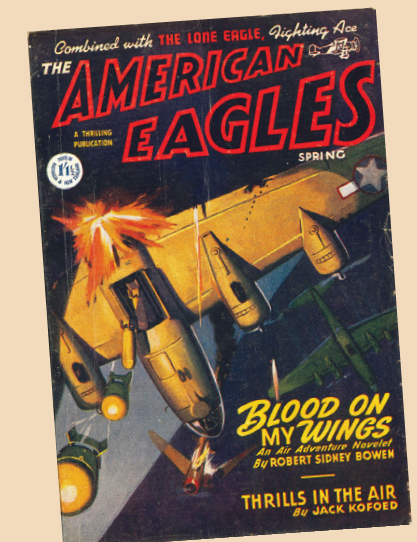
FRANKS 2015
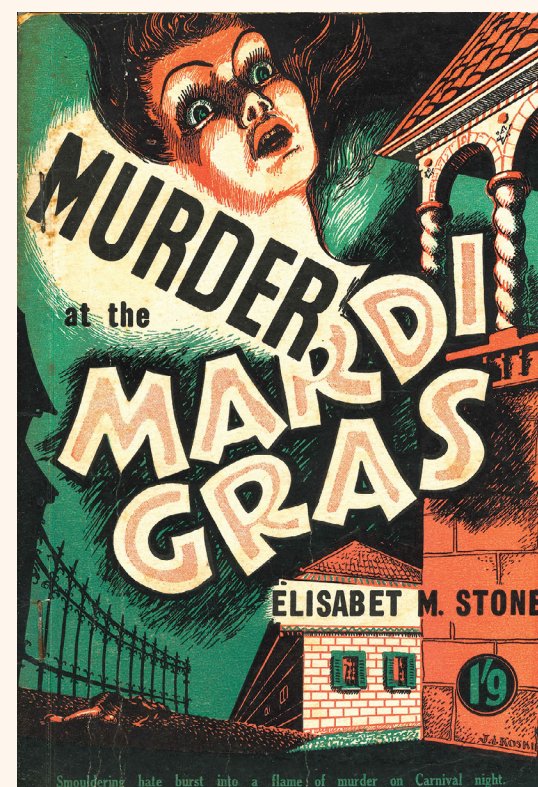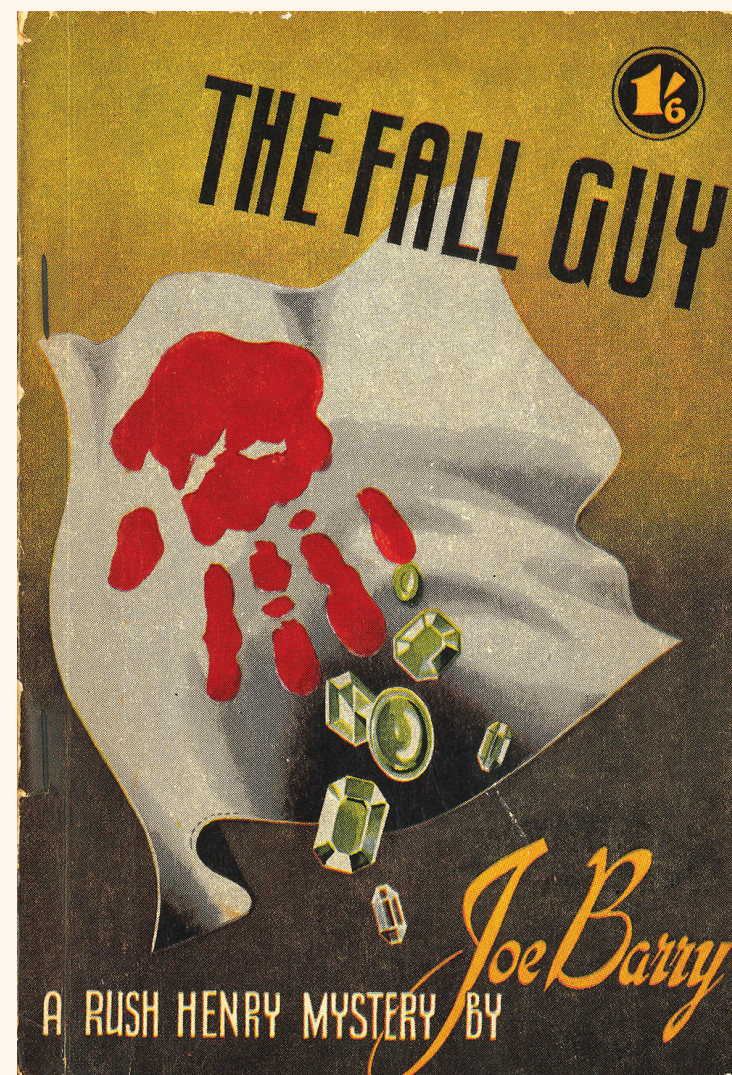
^ Elisabet M. Stone, Murder at the Mardi Gras, 1948.
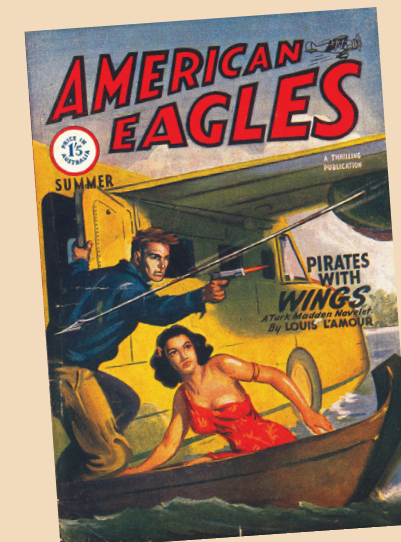Invincible Press.

Crime and Detective covers

^ American Detective Magazine, No. 8, 1952.
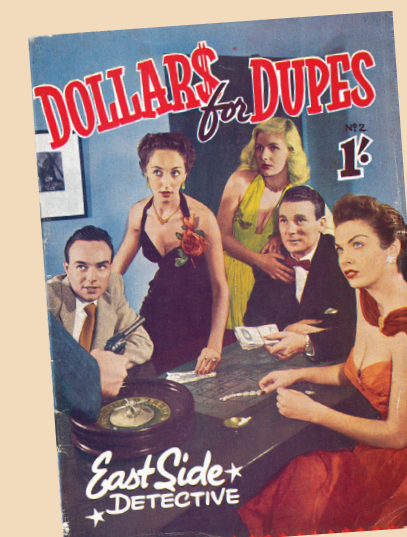Cleveland Publishing Co. (Jatkins Publishing Co.)

^ American Eagles, Vol. II, No. 12, Spring 1948.
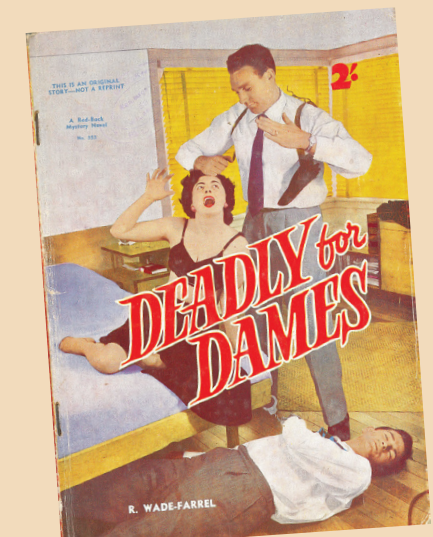Atlas Publishing and Distributing Co.

^ American Eagles, Vol. III, No. 5, Winter 1949.
Atlas Publishing and Distributing Co.
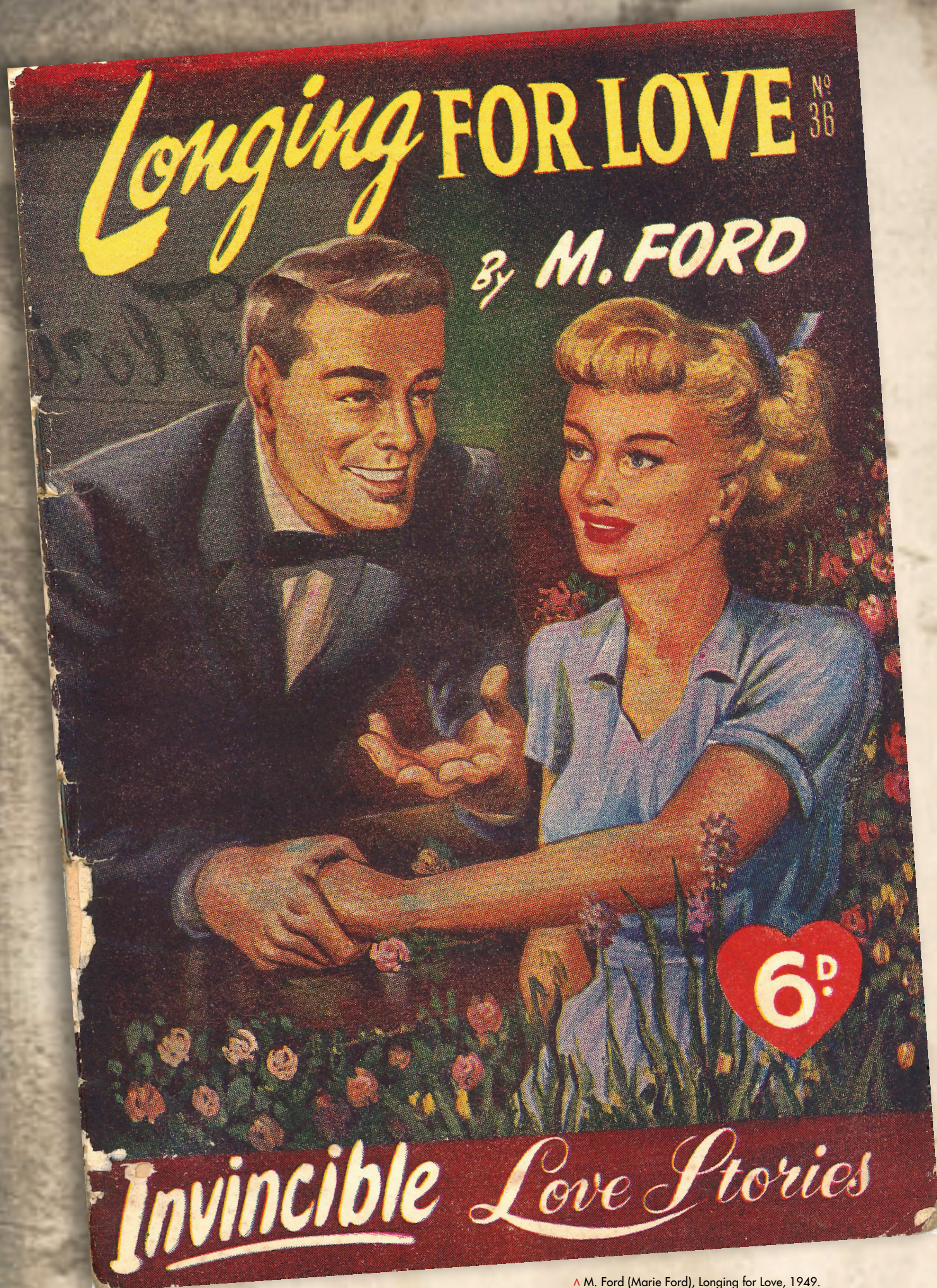

^ American Eagles, Vol. III, No. 4, Summer 1949.
Atlas Publishing and Distributing Co.

^ East Side Detective, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1954.
Action Comics.

^ R. Wade-Farrel (Richard Wilkes Hunter),
Deadly for Dames, 1954. Action Comics.

∧ M. Ford (Marie Ford), Longing for Love, 1949.
Invincible Press (Invincible Love Stories series).

CHAPTER 6

ROMANCE AND FUNNIES

The genre of romantic fiction covers an enormous field. It encompasses magazines and books, some of them one-offs, others produced by series publishers such as Harlequin and Mills and Boon. Some romance works were printed in prose, others as comics and graphic novels. Some were the work of local authors. Many were foreign reprints.

Female and male authors penned romances, often writing under allonyms and pseudonyms. The genre branched into dozens of sub-genres such as teen romances, gothic romances, and sundry occupational romances, for example nursing, detective and flight attendant stories.

According to Andrew Nette, nurse/doctor romance stories were 'a hugely popular sub-genre of pulp in the fifties and sixties' (Nette 2014a). Toni Johnson-Woods agreed:

> '...doctor/nurse stories of the 1960s that proved to be the most sought after: Shane Douglas (47), Shauna Marlowe (26), Kerry Mitchell (19), Karen Miller (10), and Leslie Wilkes (18) – all of whom were really Richard Wilkes-Hunter – were published by Horwitz and Calvert. They were on-sold to various Scandinavian countries between 1960 and 1983... These romances made the most of local locations: they were often set on Barrier Reef islands and in Papua New Guinea, and included flying doctors and outback nurses.' (2012, p.12)

(Adelaide Humphries's work, Flight Nurse, combines the themes of flying and nursing.)

Recurring concerns and concepts in the romance genre include anxiety about marriage, anxiety about sex, anxiety about the choice of a partner, the fear of 'buyer's remorse' in the choice of partner, and an overriding pressure to adhere to social rules. These tropes permit all sorts of authorial play, where readers' expectations are thwarted and where social rules are broken in creative and subversive ways.

Part of the attraction of the romance genre is its complex relationship with convention and transgression. As with crime fiction, there was a fine line between romantic and 'adult' literature. By skirting up against the edge of respectability, the romance genre flirted with what was disreputable and helped define both what was permissible and what was not. In his History of Sexuality, Michel Foucault noted something similar about 18th and 19th century sex manuals and moral treatises.

Romance writing was long disparaged as a secondary or trivial form of writing. Today, though, it is being reappraised and revalued by scholars, publishers and readers. There are several reasons for this. One is that genre fiction in general is now better understood and appreciated. Another is that, in this era of inclusion and mashups, we are more attuned to noticing how the boundaries between pulp-era genres were soft and fluid. Romance spilled over into adventure, for example, as well as into crime and even sci-fi, horror and weird tales. The packaging and branding of the Invincible Press titles, for example, was consistent across the different pulp genres, as was the process and style of writing.

> 'The issue rate was often prolific, so the numbered sequences inevitably run into the hundreds. In the romance genre, Invincible Press had their "Invincible Love Stories" series... while Cavalcade had their "Love Affair Library".'
>
> — UNDATED, *SPECIAL COLLECTIONS' PULP FICTION EXHIBITION*

A deeper reason for their continuing popularity is that romances deal with universal and enduring themes. Unequal lovers. Love triangles. The battle for pre-eminence (who wears 'the pants'?) in a relationship. Strange wives. Lewd grooms. She-devils. All these topics were core themes of late medieval romances and early modern prints and broadsides. They functioned as social propaganda, setting out desired modes of conduct, and the perils to avoid.

The 'unequal lovers' theme focuses on socially objectionable pairings: older man and younger woman; rich man and poor woman; and rich woman and poor man. That theme was popular in 16th century Nuremberg, for example, and it was also popular in 20th century pulps, appearing in romance titles such as *Reckless Moment, Childhood Sweetheart, Shameful Love, Marriage of Convenience, A Legacy of Love, A Private Affair, The Leaping Flame* and *A Heart in Doubt.*

Some of pulp romances combine different sub-themes, such as unequal lovers and love triangles. The continuity of themes over the past five centuries is striking, and the origins of the stories can be traced even further back to classical and Biblical times. One possible conclusion from this: the stories capture and speak to our subconscious. The different anxieties plausibly reflect something fundamental about urban life and the human condition.

An alternative conclusion is that the stories don't speak to us at all: that they have very little to do with us as individuals, instead belonging to a meta-text that transcends time and obeys its own rules. More than just the striking cover art, it is questions of that scale and difficulty that help explain the new interest in this old genre.

ROMANCE PULPS AND WISH FULFILMENT

'Embedded in romance fiction are images, lifestyles, heroes and heroines that often match reader desires and wish-fulfilments. The stories and characters are mainly conservative, and often reflect the social realities of the day. Indeed, the working class gal will not find happiness with her rich lover; the career girl will not marry her boss. Cleveland Publishing capitalized on the notion of European romance (beret-wearing Parisians; luxury cruise ship owners called Edouard) by setting a number of stories there, especially in France.

Romance and funnies covers

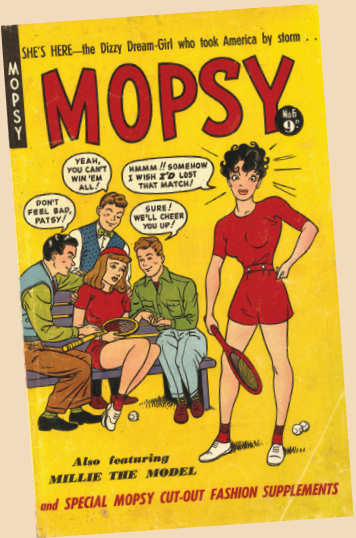∧ Teenage Confessions, No. 4, 1954.
Barmor Publications.
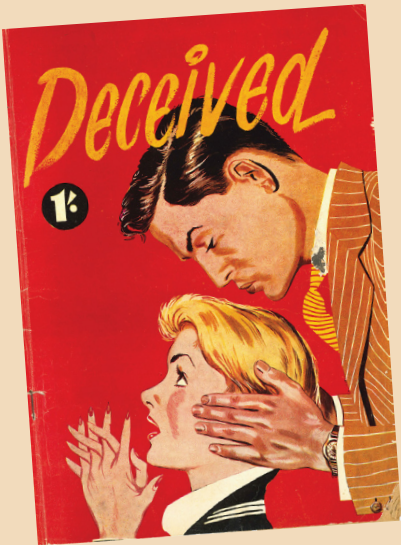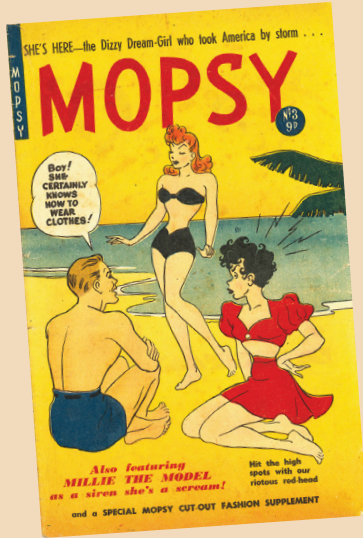

∧ Deceived, 1953.
Blue Diamond Publishing Co.

∧ My Friend Irma, No. 23, 1958.
Horwitz Publications.
Image used with permission from Horwitz Publications.

∧ Chasing Love, 1955.
Horwitz Publications.
Image used with permission from Horwitz Publications.

∧ Mopsy, No. 6, 1955.
Transport Publishing Co. Image used with permission from Horwitz Publications.

∧ Mopsy, No. 3, 1955.
Transport Publishing Co.
Image used with permission from Horwitz Publications.

^ Super Science Stories, No. 3, 1951.
Pemberton's (of Manchester).

SCIENCE FICTION AND HORROR

^ Super Science Novels Magazine (Super Science Stories), No. 13, 1953. Pemberton's (of Manchester).

Between 1950 and 1952 Horwitz published Australia's first science-fiction magazine, *Thrills Incorporated*. The 1950s were a decade of change. Sputnik circled the Earth in 1957, and many minds turned to the possibilities of science and especially of outer space. Science also fuelled post-war anxieties, including fears of a nuclear war. By the end of the decade, science fiction had well and truly overtaken westerns in the pulp pantheon.

Many of the most prolific authors of pulp crime and westerns also turned their hand to science fiction. Gordon Bleeck, for example, used his pseudonym Belli Luigi for *Master-Mind Menace* and *Depths of Death* from the series *Scientific Thrillers*. (Dunn 2012)

The authors modelled their stories on examples from overseas, and especially from America – such as books by Philip K Dick, AE van Vogt, Isaac Asimov and Ray Bradbury. Sub-genres of sci-fi and fantasy included sword and sorcery stories, space operas, psychological thrillers and dystopian novels. In the 1960s, Horwitz was the main Australian publisher of horror and 'dark fantasy' books – some of them evidently authored by JE MacDonnell.

'*Ape of God* (Currawong, 1943) and its sequel *Monster at Large* (Currawong, 1943) are probably of greatest interest to the horror/weird reader. "*Ape*" is a contemporary Australian retelling of *Frankenstein*. Indeed, the "doctor" of this tale lives in the Sydney suburb of Wollstonecraft (Mary Shelley's middle name) and the "monster" of this tale is given a copy of Shelley's book to read. He also reads Lovecraft's "*Herbert West: Reanimator*" which disturbs him!

'The most popular of the Horwitz Gothic authors was Caroline Farr. Farr was a pseudonym. The first Farr novel (*The Intruder,* 1962) was written by Lee Pattinson but all the subsequent Farr books up to 1977 were written by Richard Wilkes-Hunter. Books such as: *Web of Horror* (GM5, 1966), *Mansion of Evil* (GM7, 1966), *The House of Tombs* (GM8, 1966), *Witch's Hammer* (GM11, 1967), *The Possessed* (GM12, 1973) and *Castle of Terror* (GM13, 1975) to name but a few.' (Paulsen 1995)

'Although horror pulps were not as popular as detective and romance, Australian publishers still committed themselves to pushing out "spine-tingling" titles in that genre. The Australian Charles Higham compiled for Horwitz a number of titles that mixed horror with witchcraft, vampirism, ghosts and the occult. More often than not the stories he used were written by overseas writers such as Bram Stoker, Edgar Allan Poe, and Sheridan Le Fanu. Almost all the Horwitz horror covers were done by the Australian artist Frank Benier.'

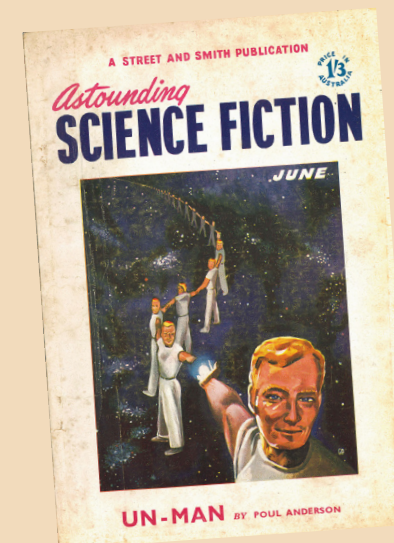—— UNDATED, *SPECIAL COLLECTIONS' PULP FICTION EXHIBITION*

^ Startling Stories, No. 17, 1954. Pemberton's (of Manchester).

^ Super Science Stories, No. 5, 1951. Pemberton's (of Manchester).
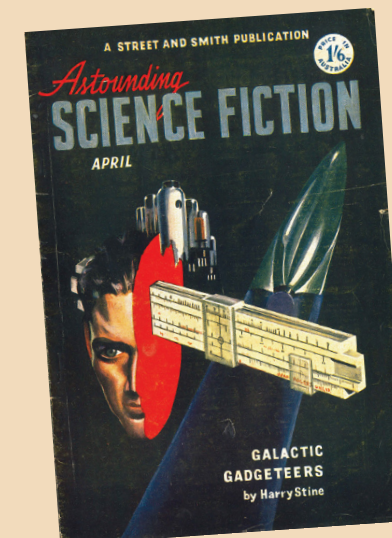
Science Fiction covers

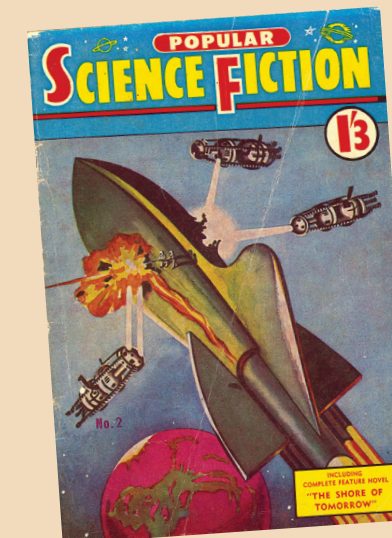^ Astounding Science Fiction, Vol. IX, No. 6, June 1953. Atlas Publishing & Distributing Co.

^ Astounding Science Fiction, Vol. IX, No. 1, January 1953. Atlas Publishing & Distributing Co.

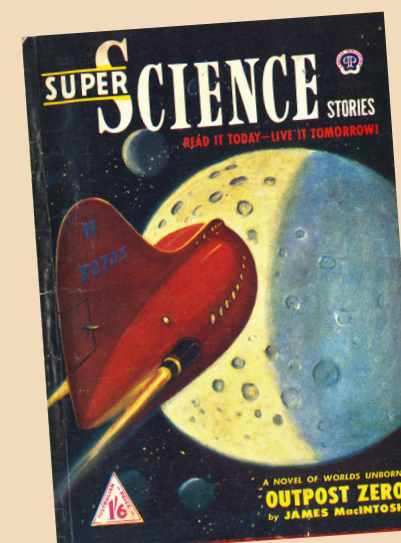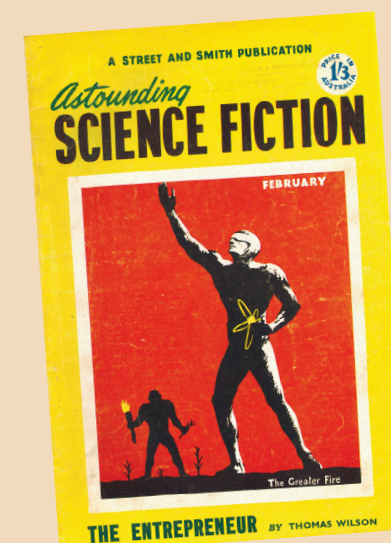^ Super Science Stories, No. 11, 1952. Pemberton's (of Manchester).

^ Astounding Science Fiction, Vol. VIII, No. 4, April 1952. Atlas Publishing & Distributing Co.
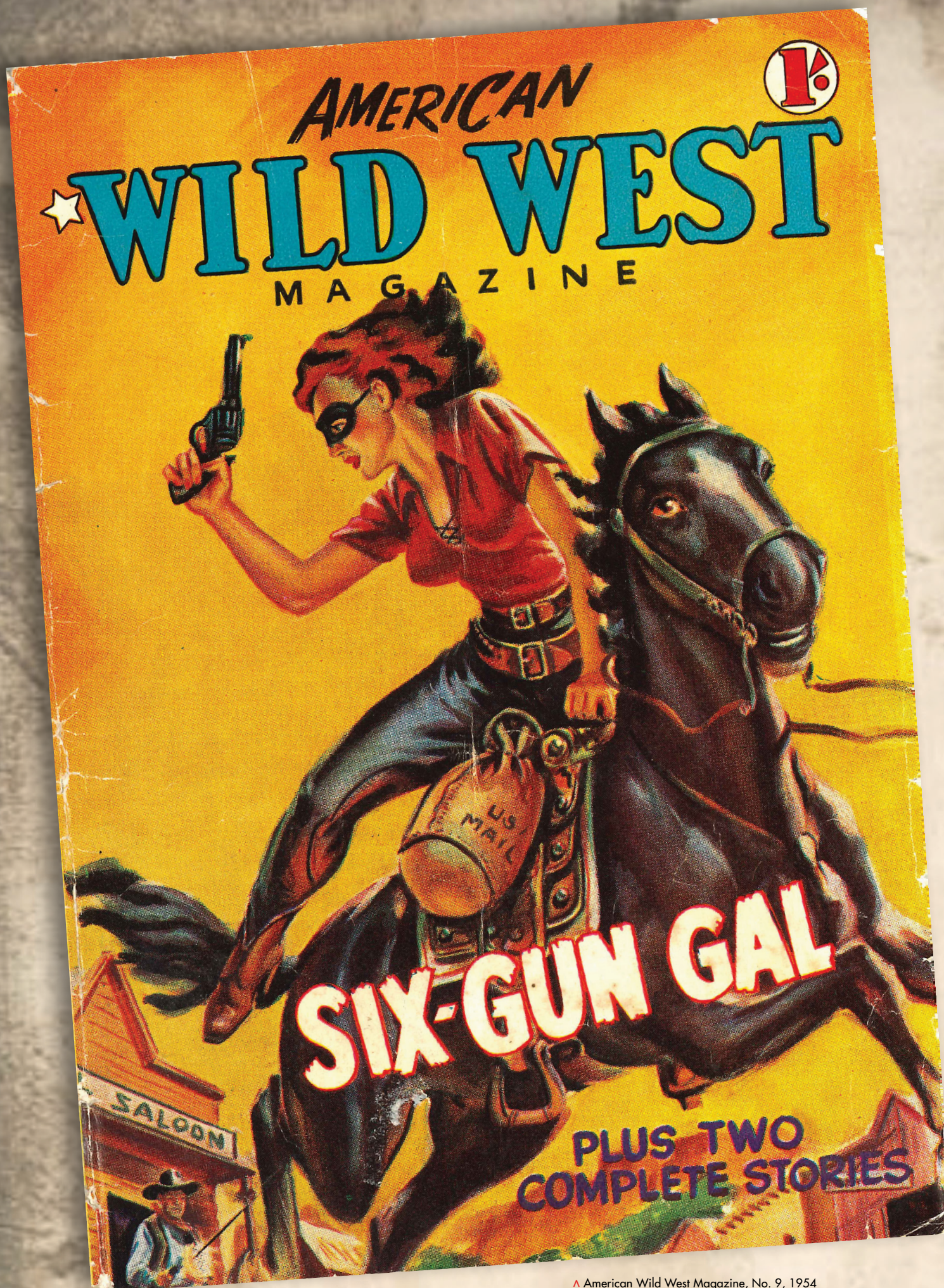

^ Popular Science Fiction, No. 2, 1953. Blue Diamond Publishing Co.

^ Super Science Stories, No. 7, 1952. Pemberton's (of Manchester).

^ Astounding Science Fiction, Vol. IX, No. 2, February 1953. Atlas Publishing & Distributing Co.

^ American Wild West Magazine, No. 9, 1954
Cleveland Publishing Co.

CHAPTER 8
WESTERNS

Westerns – not space operas but horse operas – are the least researched and possibly the least appreciated of all the pulp genres. These escapist adventures are set in a mythic West of gunslingers and outlaws.

This is the literature of the wild frontier. All the expected elements are present: fist fights, gun fights, horse stealers, cattle rustlers, frontier romance, outlaws and rough justice. Though the books were published in Australia – and sometimes written by Australians – they made little or no effort to relocate the American frontier to Australia. The books contain the jargon and geography of the American west: Texas, Carson City, Hopalong Cassidy, the Colt revolver, ranchers, range riders.

'When westerns were exploding in the pulp magazines from the 20s through the 50s – voraciously consumed by readers almost faster than they could be written – there was even a derogatory term applied to the uncountable fictional western heroes – gun dummies. [Readers sought] fast six-gun action in a fast moving story wrapped up in one or two readings.'

NETTE 2017

Crime and detective pulps were criticised for their overt violence and sex, but pulp westerns mostly escaped this disapproval. They were raw and gritty but the bloodshed wasn't sensational: the villains usually needed justice; and most cowboys had more affection for their horse than for their human partners.

Classic titles include *Gun Girl, Cowboy Hoodoo, Lead Is Law, Hangtree Justice, Laughing Dude, Border Badman* and *Hasty Lead*. Women, when they appear in these stories, are typically figures of conquest and catalysts for violence. When First Nations people appear, they are often in the background or they are cast as the uncivilised enemy.

Westerns covers

∧ Exciting Western, Vol. II, No. 9, October 1953.
Atlas Publishing & Distributing Co.
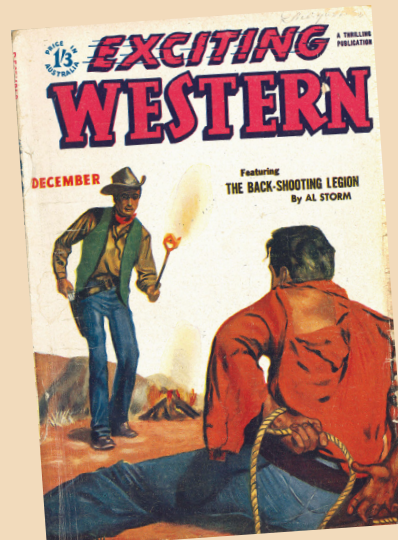
∧ Exciting Western, Vol. II, No. 11, December 1953.
Atlas Publishing & Distributing Co.

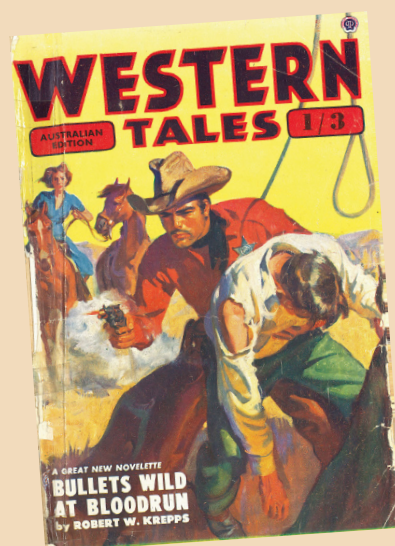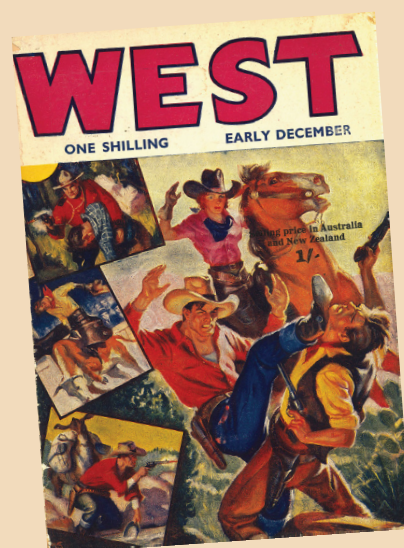∧ 10 Story Western Magazine, No. 6, 1951.
Pemberton's (of Manchester).

∧ Western Tale, No. 16, 1952.
Pemberton's (of Manchester).

∧ West, Vol. XXX, No. XII, 1938.
The World's Work.

∧ Walt Coburn, Trigger Tamed, 1945.
Young's Merchandising Co.

'Tod Conrad wrote 21 westerns for Horwitz… Nine years earlier, Conrad, whose real name was Richard Wilkes-Hunter, wrote *Laughing Guns* for Transport Publishing. Their "Sporting Western" series was usually a slim digest of 48 to 66 pages long and often contained both a novelette and a short story.

'Cleveland Publishing had numerous "western" imprints such as Big Horn, Condor, Sierra, and Santa Fe. Des R Dunn, co-writer of the "Larry Kent" detective novels, penned *Next Stop Boothill*, a Bison Western, under the very western-sounding name of Gunn Halliday.'

—— UNDATED, *SPECIAL COLLECTIONS' PULP FICTION EXHIBITION*

MARSHALL GROVER

'Leonard Meares, better known by his most-famous pseudonym, Marshall Grover, is a legend in the genre, author of at least 731 novels… His work includes the *Larry and Stretch* series, which was translated into Norwegian in the 1960s, and the *Big Jim* series, which was translated into Swedish, also in the 1960s.' (Mills, undated)

Meares was 'Australia's most prolific writer of western stories' (Wilde et al. 1994)

CLEVELAND WESTERNS

'Cleveland Westerns are sentimental, escapist tales that follow classic storytelling traditions: melodramatic narratives with a cast of hard-nosed marshals, ruthless bounty hunters and hard-scrabble ranchers battling outlaws, Indian raiders and insurmountable odds. It's the good guys versus the bad. You can bet there's a shoot-out, an ambush, a damsel in distress and loads of romance… [but] the hero doesn't always get the girl.

'According to Les Atkins, son of Cleveland founder Jack Atkins, "My father, being the staunch Catholic he was, never wanted sex in his stories… He didn't want Indians either. The only Indians that appeared said 'How' in greeting. We don't use foul language, we don't blaspheme. But time marches on. Now there are Indians and some naked women in our stories, but it's not Playboy sex, it's not descriptive sex at all, but sex still sells, even in the west."

'[Toni] Johnson-Woods attributes Cleveland's longevity to the enduring appeal of the western – the vigilante gunslinger and the brooding anti-hero – and the shared frontier values of the American west and the Australian outback… when men were men and their best friends were their horses. There's a lot of anti-technology in [the novelettes] about the railways coming through and they are anti-big-business. The baddies and goodies are always easy to tell apart.' (Morris 2012)

Texts Rangers

^ Texas Rangers, Vol. VI, No. 12, October 1951.
Atlas Publishing & Distribution Co.

^ Texas Rangers, Vol. V, No. 5, March 1949.
Atlas Publishing & Distribution Co.

^ Texas Rangers, Vol. VI, No. 2, August 1950.
Atlas Publishing & Distribution Co.

^ Texas Rangers, Vol. V, No. 12, June 1950.
Atlas Publishing & Distribution Co.

^ Texas Rangers, Vol. V, No. 2, September 1948.
Atlas Publishing & Distribution Co.

Invincible Westerns

^ Alan Hill, Roarin' Range, 1951.
Invincible Press (Invincible Westerns series, No. 114).

^ D. Healy, In Old Missouri, 1951.
Invincible Press (Invincible Westerns series, No. 96).
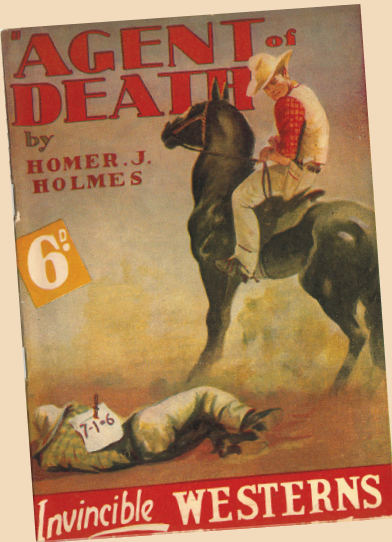
^ Homer J. Holmes, Agent of Death, 1949.
Invincible Press (Invincible Westerns series).
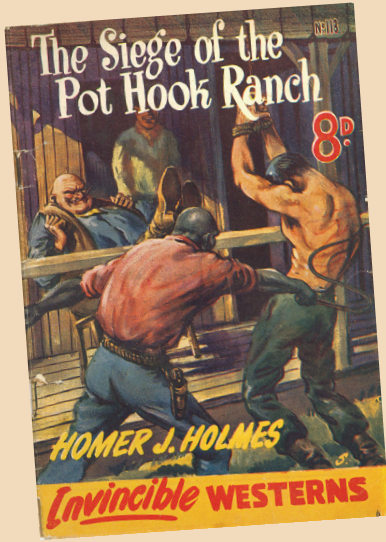
^ Homer J. Holmes, The Siege of the Pot Hook Ranch,
1951. Invincible Press (Invincible Westerns series,
No. 113).

^ J. W. Heming, Snap Burke and the Arrow Murders
1950. Invincible Press (Invincible Westerns series,
No. 49).

^ Rex Gold, Lead is Law, 1949.
Invincible Press (Invincible Westerns series, No. 25).

Transport Publishing 'Sporting Western' series

^ Hamilton Peck, Border Badman, 1950.
Transport Publishing Co. ('Sporting Western' series).
Image used with permission from Horwitz Publications.

^ Bill Richards, Death Stalks the Trail, 1942.
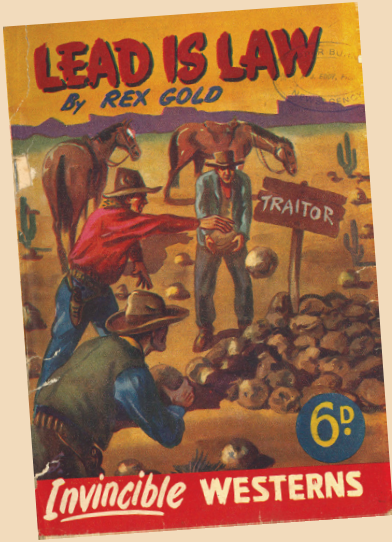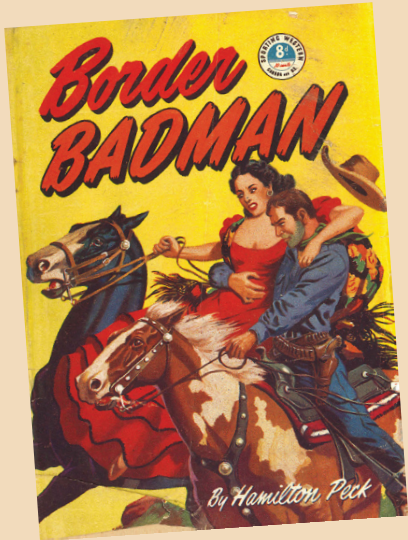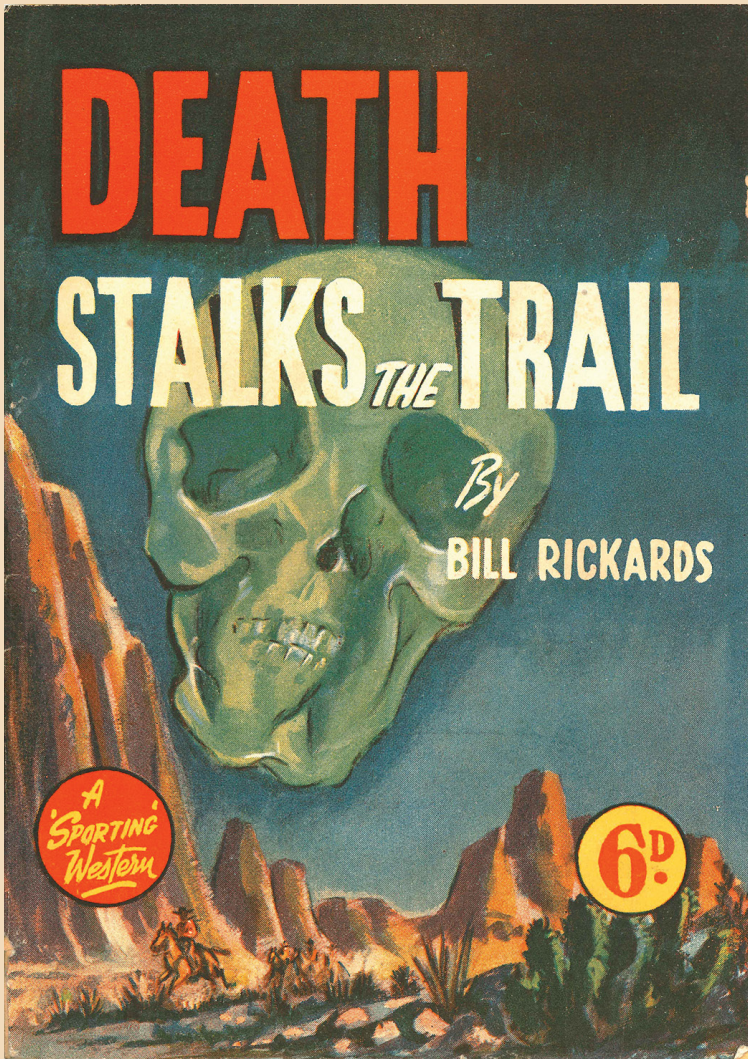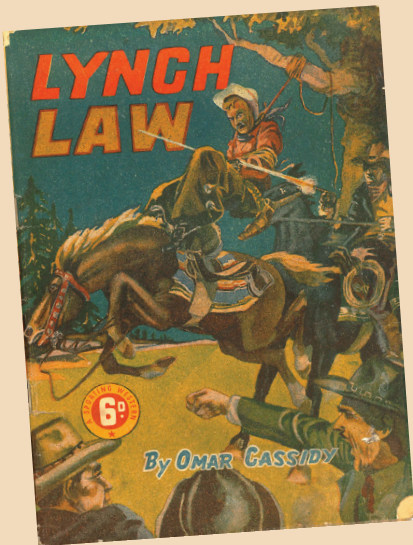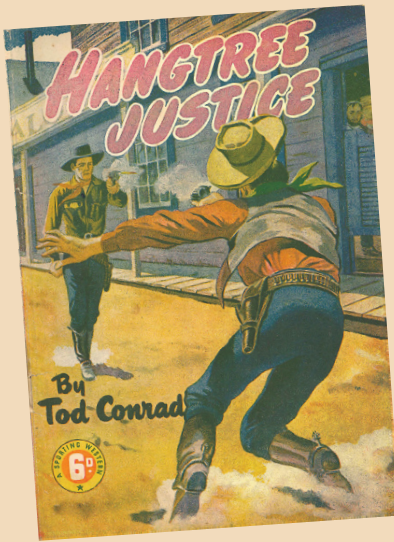Transport Publishing Co. ('Sporting Western' series).
Image used with permission from Horwitz Publications.

^ Omar Cassidy, Lynch Law, 1948.
Transport Publishing Co. ('Sporting Western' series).
Image used with permission from Horwitz Publications.

^ Wilton West (John J. Boniface, Jr.), Hasty Lead, 1950.
Transport Publishing Co. ('Sporting Western' series).
Image used with permission from Horwitz Publications.

^ Hangtree Justice by Tod Conrad (Richard Wilkes-Hunter). Published by
Transport Publishing Co. ('Sporting Western' series), 1949.
Image used with permission from Horwitz Publications.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION: A CULTURAL READING OF AUSTRALIAN PULP

Pulps speak to Australia's cultural connections to the United States of America and the United Kingdom. They speak to censorship, and to ideas about science and the future. They capture cultural moments and perhaps even a cultural subconscious, one that prefigures social movements such as feminism and civil rights, and changing ideas about heroism and masculinity.

Pulps were 'very much products of their eras, and often relied on stereotypes surrounding both gender and race: hypermasculine American men, damsels in distress, femme fatales, and people of Asian, African, or Middle Eastern descent depicted as "savage or primitive".' (Burgess 2017)

In 'British Australia' and 'White Australia' there was an overtly racist current in the 1930s moral campaign against pulps. The so-called Cultural Defence Committee argued pulps aimed at the US market were dangerous because that country was home to:

'"illiterate and superstitious migrants" from central and southern Europe, and "African Negroes" – hence the recurrent jungle themes, the stories of "voodoo" and "demonology" (the text is obviously referring to Tarzan and Mandrake the Magician here!) and the general moral nihilism of US comics and pulps.' (Doyle and Johnson-Woods 2015, p.8)

The audience for pulps was predominantly male. Women on pulp covers were typically presented as villains or victims. Conventional gender roles go largely unchallenged: 'men affirm their masculinity in war battles, gunfights, boxing matches and sexual promiscuity… Women act as guides, helpmates or love interests, but do not participate (in general) in the action.' (—— undated, *Special Collections' Pulp Fiction Exhibition*)

To some extent, however, the pulps reflected changing gender roles and emerging social trends in life and work: 'the office romances of the 1950s explore the issues of post-war women who wanted careers but who still lived at home, who sought parental permission before accepting or leaving a job, and who had to deal with unequal pay and conditions.' (Johnson-Woods 2012, pp.14-15)

Perhaps that is the principal value of pulps today – as historical and socio-cultural artefacts. Rather than read them for their literary value,

> 'You might more commonly read them as symptom, to see laid bare the unspoken fears, desires, dreams and nightmares of the time. Doubly, trebly so when it comes to sex and sexuality. Among the preoccupations of 50s smut pulps there's a dogged and recurring fascination with queerness, lesbian sex, bondage and sadism, gay sex, teen sex.' (Doyle 2018)

Highly revealing of personal and cultural anxieties, the books are windows into the social and sexual mores of the 1950s.

> 'Although they would have been considered little more than mindless lunchtime fodder at the time of their publication Horwitz's adult paperbacks have survived as little documents of some of the more extreme and oddball aspects of low-rent Australian culture, encompassing subjects as diverse as true crime, film tie-ins for local exploitation films, and the (mostly fictional) lives of sex workers in Kings Cross (a suburb of Sydney notorious for its prostitution and drug rackets).' (Harrison 2007)

When the pulps were first made, their authors and publishers were probably unaware they were capturing an important cultural moment. That the moment was fleeting, and captured almost accidentally, which makes the pulps even more intriguing, and even more important to study.

Pulp and culture: Queer pulp

'…homoerotic pulp fiction had been entertaining the underground gay masses since the 1950s. Titles like *Skid Row Sweetie*, *Unnatural Wife*, *The Third Sex*, *Mr. Queen*, and *Chamber of Homos* were covertly positioned on the shelves of train stations, drugstores and newsstands for those who knew what they were looking for and where to get them.

'Lesbian pulp fiction saw a massive boom in the 1950s and '60s, with many of these books becoming bestsellers. The initial success of these pulps is in part attributed to the fact that they were heavily marketed to capture the voyeuristic sensibilities of heterosexual men who enjoyed reading about two women engaged in sexual relations.

'…gay male pulp fiction was not embraced by mainstream publishing like lesbian pulp fiction was. Between 1940 and 1969, fewer than 300 pulps were published by mainstream presses that featured substantial gay male characters, plots or themes.'

SCOT 2013

MURDER at the MARDI GRAS
ELISABET M. STONE
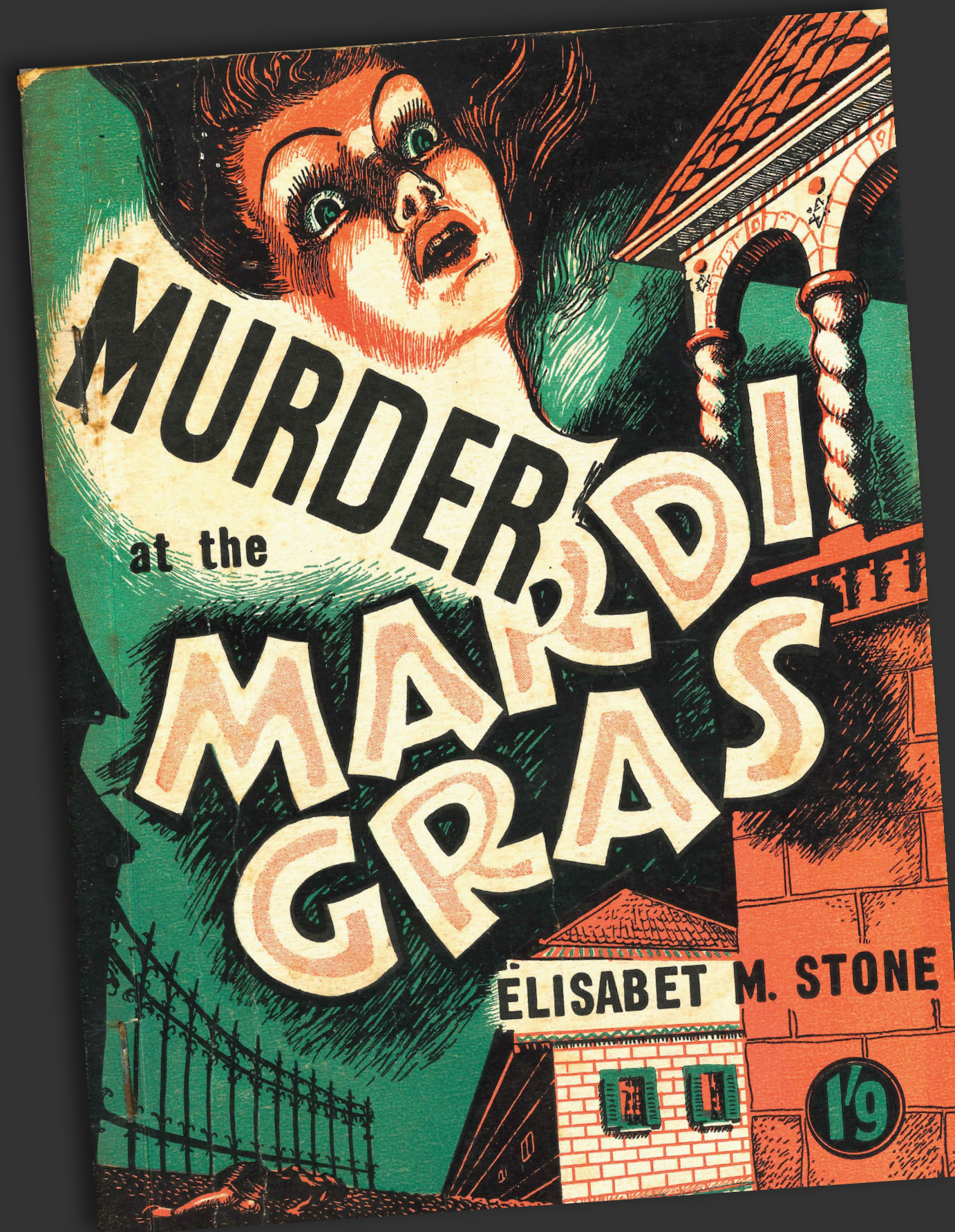
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Doyle P (2015b) (curator) *Pulp Confidential: Quick and dirty publishing of the 40s and 50s*. Online version of an exhibition at State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

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Doyle P and Johnson-Woods T (2015) *Pulp Confidential: Quick and dirty publishing of the 40s and 50s*. Exhibition catalogue. State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

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APPENDIX 1

Key Australian pulp publishers and imprints

ACTION

CLEVELAND

CURRAWONG

HORWITZ

JATKINS PUBLISHING CO.

JUBILEE

MAGPIE

ORIGINAL NOVELS FOUNDATION

TRANSPORT.

APPENDIX 2

Books and comics in the Australian Pulp 'Golden Age' exhibition, La Trobe University Library, 2019

CRIME AND DETECTIVE

Edward S Aarons. *Escape to Love*, (Original Novels Foundation, 1953). Phantom Books No. 553.

All-True Crime. No. 6. (Jubilee Publications, 1950s).

American Crime Magazine. No. 16. (Cleveland Publishing Co., 1954).

American Detective Magazine. No. 4. (Jatkins Publishing Co., February 1952).

American Detective Magazine. No. 5. (Jatkins Publishing Co., March 1952).

American Detective Magazine. No. 8. (Jatkins Publishing Co., June 1952).

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Joe Barry (Joe Barry Lake). *Dangerous Bargain* (Original Novels Foundation, 1954). Phantom Books No. 570.

Joe Barry. *The Fall Guy* (Invincible Press, [1945 or 1946]).

Joe Barry (Joe Barry Lake). *Three for the Money* (Original Novels Foundation, 1954). Phantom Books No. 599.

Dolan Birkley (Dolores Hitchens). *The Blue Geranium* (Invincible Press, [c.1948]).

Lawrence G Blochmann. *Pursuit* (Original Novels Foundation, 1954). Phantom Books No. 559.

William Bogart. *Murder Man* (Original Novels Foundation, 1955). Phantom Books No. 640.

Gil Brewer. *Satan is a Woman* (Original Novels Foundation, 1954). Phantom Books No. 571.

Marc Brody. *Murder in my Fashion* (Horwitz Publications for Transport Publishing Co., 1955).

Marc Brody. *Stop Press Standover* (Horwitz Publications for Transport Publishing Co., 1955).

Marc Brody. *Baby Your Racket's Busted* (Horwitz Publications for Transport Publishing Co., 1957).

Marc Brody. *Obituary Blonde* (Horwitz Publications for Transport Publishing Co., 1957).

Gerald Brown. *Murder to an Audience* (Original Novels Foundation, 1954). Phantom Books No. 591.

Robert Chavis. *Death on the Border* (Original Novels Foundation, 1958). Phantom Books No. 782.

Mel Colton (Hal Braham). *Never Kill a Cop* (Original Novels Foundation, [1954]). Phantom Books No. 606.

Bernard Cronin. *The Shadows Mystery* (Frank Johnson, [1945]). Magpie Books No. 95.

Norman A Daniels (Norman Arthur Danberg). *Mistress on a Deathbed* (Original Novels Foundation, 1954). Phantom Books No. 578.

Lester Dent. *High Stakes* (Original Novels Foundation, 1955). Phantom Books No. 641.

Dick Barton Special Agent. No. 7. (Ayers & James, [1953]).

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